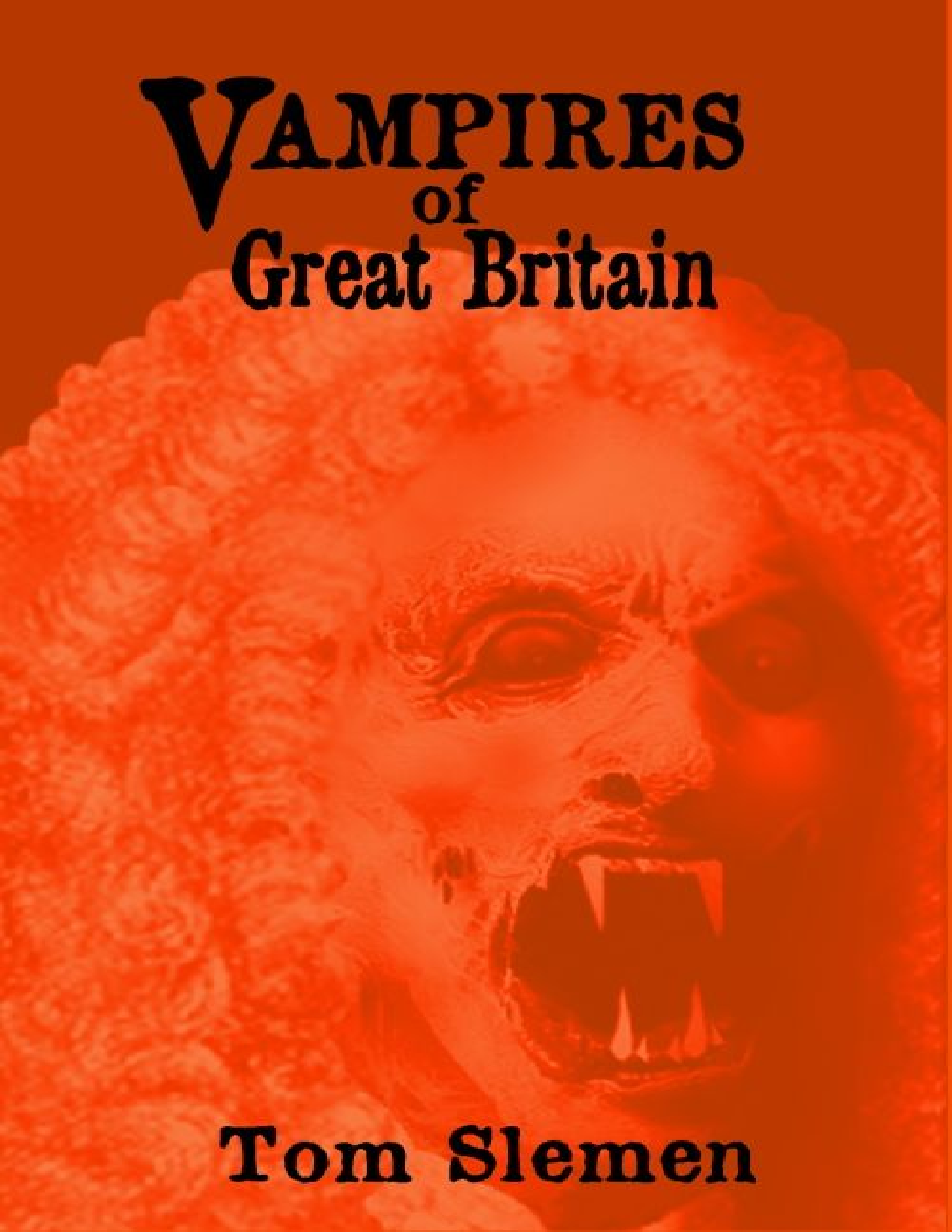
Vampires of Great Britain



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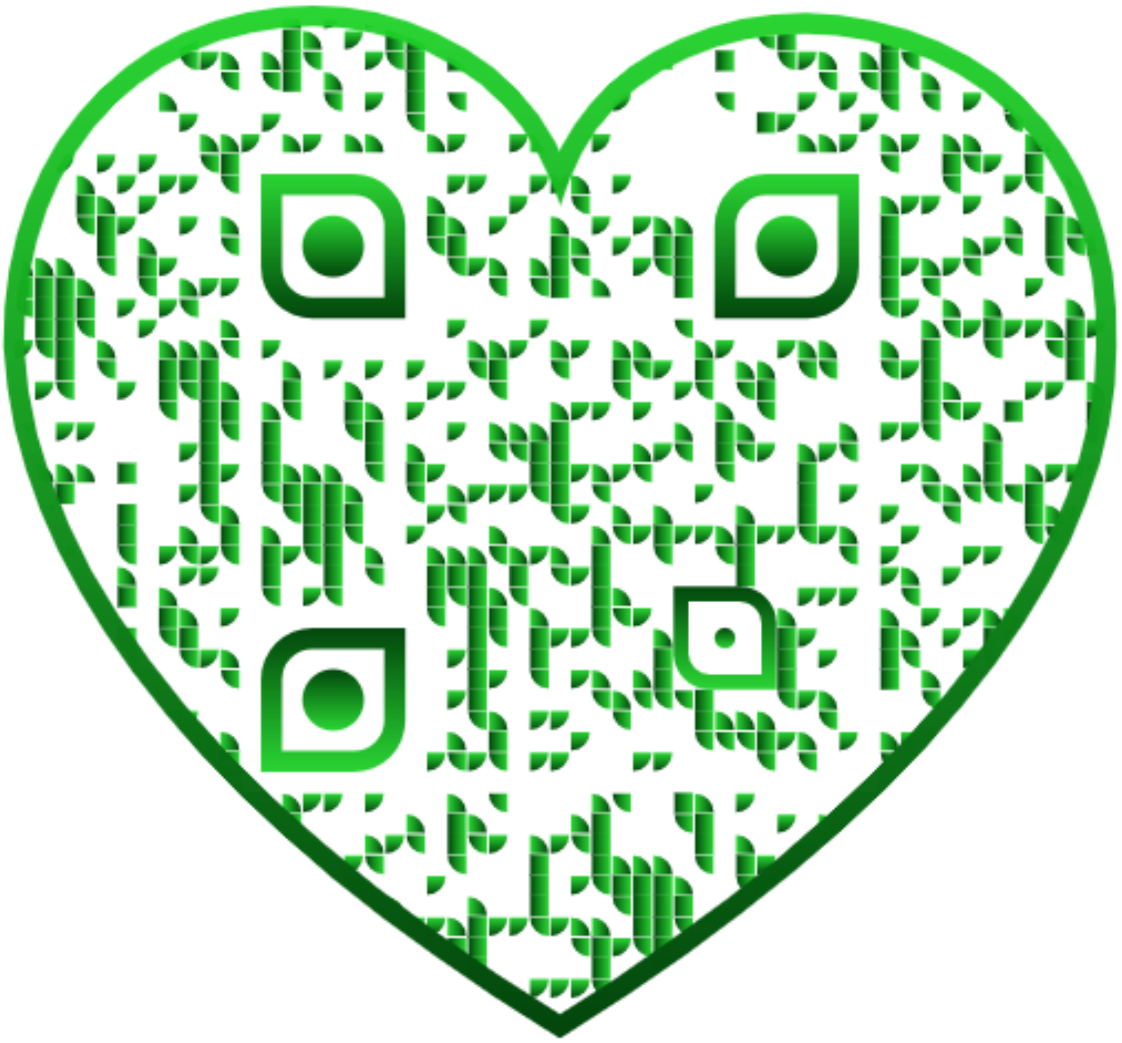

Vampires of Great Britain

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Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord.
And let perpetual light shine upon him.
Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison. Our Father.
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
From the Gate of Hell,
O Lord, deliver his soul.
May he rest in peace,
Amen.
A vampire-laying prayer

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Introduction

The late Reverend Christopher Neil-Smith, who died in 1995, was a High Anglican priest who not only carried out numerous exorcisms, but was also involved to a certain extent in vampire-hunting. Authorised by the Bishop of London to tackle evil in all of its twisted forms, the Reverend Neil-Smith took on many cases where people came to him with problems of a vampiric nature. For example, in the 1970s, a woman came to the reverend because eerie deep scratch-marks appeared on her wrist each night, and the woman felt blood being drawn out of her body through these sinister cuts. The reverend ascertained that the woman had no history of self-harm and no psychiatric illness, and felt a vampire was using her for a regular night feed. An exorcism was performed and the woman was troubled no more by the nocturnal bloodsucker. Then there was the case of the South African man who also felt his blood being sucked from his body each night, only his wounds were non-existent, and after the Rite of Exorcism was performed on this individual by the Reverend Neil-Smith, the mysterious nightly siphoning of blood ceased. The reverend also tackled a case where a man was apparently being subjected to regular vampiric attacks by his deceased brother. The man would lie in bed and become weaker and weaker as if something was sucking out his very life-force. The reverend performed an exorcism on the man, and once again the vampire-like symptoms ceased. Neil-Smith's definition of a vampire was that it was a half-animal, half human hybrid, and that it was usually conjured up and directed by Devil-worshippers.

Another reverend who believes in vampires and claims to have met one of them does not want to be named. He told me how, in the 1960s, he was called to the three-storey home of a certain philanthropic Baroness in the East End of London because of the regular appearance of a cloaked man who had appeared in several bedrooms and seduced three females by biting their necks and breasts. The reverend confronted what he believed was a vampire and burned its face with holy water. After thrusting a crucifix in the face of the night visitor, it turned and hurled itself through a window and crashed to the pavement two storeys below without sustaining any harm. The Baroness said she had been 'haunted' by the very same entity as a teenager whenever she had stayed at her uncle's home on the island of St

Michael's Mount. The reverend described the vampire as a caped man with a curly white hair (resembling a periwig), and years later the holy man saw an 18th century engraving of a man who looked remarkably like the vampire in a book. That engraving was of a mysterious historical personage known as the Count of St Germain. Historians have a difficult time explaining the Count because of his incredible lifespan. Some called him the Undying Count, and the great writer and philosopher Voltaire described him as "A man who does not die and knows everything". Here is the Count's strange history.

In 1745, one of the most intriguing people in history visited London; a man who was said to be over a thousand years old. Some said he was in league with the Devil, others thought he was a Himalayan yogi of the highest order; all that we know is that, according to written historical references, a Count St Germain was apparently on the European scene from 1651 to 1896 - a period of 245 years. Unable to explain the incredible lifespan of this man, the historians either omitted him from the history books altogether or simply claimed several impostors in different time periods were responsible for the myth. However, if we face the unadulterated facts about the count as they were written, they paint a very perplexing picture of a phenomenal man.

When the English soldiers returned from the Holy Land after the third Crusade came to a disastrous end in the twelfth century, they brought back with them many fabulous tales of the mysterious Orient.

One particular story the crusaders often told was of a man known in the East as the Wandering Jew. The story went as follows. In the Judgement Hall of Pontius Pilate, there was a Jewish doorkeeper named Cartaphilus, who had actually been present at the trial of Jesus of Nazareth. When Christ was dragging his cross through the streets on the way to Calvary, he halted for a moment to rest, and at this point, Cartaphilus stepped out from the large crowd lining the route and told Jesus to hurry up.

Jesus looked at Cartaphilus and said, "I will go now, but thou shall wait until I return."

The Roman soldiers escorting Christ to the crucifixion site pushed Cartaphilus back into the crowd, and Jesus continued on his way.

What did Jesus mean? thought Cartaphilus, and many years later, the doorkeeper gradually realized that all his friends were dying of old age, while he had not aged at all. Cartaphilus remembered Christ's words and

shuddered. He would wander the earth without ageing until Christ's Second Coming.

This tale was dismissed by the religious authorities of the day as an apocryphal yarn, and the legend of the Wandering Jew was later interpreted by the Christians as an allegorical story, symbolizing the global wanderings and persecutions of the Jewish race because of their refusal to accept Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. The tale gradually passed into European folklore and joined the other fairy tales of the Middle Ages.

Then, in the 13th century, a number of travellers returning to England from the Continent spoke of meeting and hearing of a strange blasphemous man who claimed he had been around when Christ was on earth. These curious reports were later strengthened in 1228 when an Armenian archbishop visited St. Albans. The archbishop told his astonished audience that he had recently dined with an unusual man who confessed to being Cartaphilus, the man who mocked Christ.

Many more encounters with Cartaphilus were reported in the following centuries, and each meeting seemed to be taking place nearer and nearer to Western Europe. Then one day in the year 1740, a mysterious man dressed in black arrived in Paris.

The gaudily-dressed fashion-conscious Parisians instantly noticed the sinister stranger, and admired the dazzling collection of diamond rings on each of his fingers. The man in Black also wore diamond-encrusted shoe-buckles, a display of wealth that obviously suggested that he was an aristocrat, yet nobody in Paris could identify him. From the Jewish cast of his handsome countenance, some of the superstitious citizens of Paris believed he was Cartaphilus, the Wandering Jew.

The man of mystery later identified himself as the Count of St. Germain, and he was quickly welcomed by the nobility into the fashionable circles of Parisian life. In the distinguished company of writers, philosophers, scientists, Freemasons and aristocrats, the Count displayed a veritable plethora of talents. He was an accomplished pianist, a gifted singer and violinist, a linguist who spoke fluent Spanish, Greek, Italian, Russian, Portugese, Chinese, Arabic, Sanskrit, English, and of course, French. The Count of St Germain was also a fine artist, an historian, and a brilliant alchemist. He maintained that he had travelled widely, and recounted his many visits to the court of the Shah of Persia, where he had learned the

closely-guarded science of improving and enlarging gemstones. The Count also hinted that he had learned many other arcane lessons of the occult.

What stunned his awestruck listeners most was his insinuation that he was over a thousand years old. This came about one evening when the course of conversation turned to religious matters. When the Count was invited to comment on the subject, he movingly described Christ as if he had personally known him, and talked in detail of the miraculous water-into-wine event at the marriage feast of Cana as if he were describing a party-trick. After his peculiar anecdote, the Count became tearful, and in a broken, uncharacteristically sombre voice, he said, "I had always known that Christ would meet a bad end."

The Count of St Germain also spoke of other historical celebrities such as Cleopatra and Henry VIII and as if he had known them personally. Whenever sceptical historians would try to trip the Count up by questioning him about trivial historical details that were not widely known, the Count would always reply with astonishing accuracy, leaving the questioner quite perplexed.

The Count's claim to be much older than he looked was reinforced one day when the old Countess von Georgy met him. She immediately recognized the enigmatic nobleman as the same individual she had met fifty years previously in Venice, where she had been the ambassadress. But she was amazed that the Count still looked the same age now as he did then, which was about forty-five. The Countess was naturally confused by this, and asked the Count St Germain if his father had been in Venice at that time. The Count shook his head and told her that it had been himself, and he baffled the Countess by telling her how beautiful she had looked as a young woman and how he had enjoyed playing her favourite musical piece on the violin. The Countess recoiled in disbelief and told him, "Why, you must be almost one hundred years old."

"That is not impossible." replied the Count.

"You are a most extraordinary man!" exclaimed the old Countess, "A devil!"

The comparison to a demon touched a sore point in the Count, and in a raised voice, he replied, "For pity's sake! No such names!"

He turned his back on the shocked Countess and stormed out of the room.

The King of France, Louis XV was intrigued by the stories of the mysterious Count St Germain. He sought him out and offered him an invitation to attend the royal court. The Count accepted the invitation, and succeeded in captivating the king and his courtiers, as well as Madame de Pompadour, the king's mistress.

During the spectacular banquets that were held at the court, the Count would abstain from food and wine, but would sometimes sip mineral water instead. Furthermore, when the Count did dine, it was always in private, and precisely what he did consume is not known, although some of the courtiers claimed he was a vegetarian.

Count St Germain arrived in London in 1743 and lodged at a house in St Martin's Street. He stayed in the capital for two years, and during that time he set up a laboratory and carried out mysterious experiments in it that seem to have been of an alchemical nature. His work was closely guarded, but seems to have involved attempts at manufacturing artificial diamonds. During his stay in London, the count was a frequent guest at the Kit-Kat club, where he mingled with members of the highest nobility. At this prestigious club, the Count once astounded members by talking of two inventions he was working on; the steam train and steamboat. This was twenty years before James Watt put together his crude prototype of the steam engine, and 84 years before George Stephenson's Rocket steam train of 1829.

In 1745, the year of the Jacobite Rebellion in Britain, the Count St Germain was arrested at a coffee house in Paternoster Row and charged with spying. Horace Walpole, the son of Sir Robert Walpole, Britain's first Prime Minister, mentioned the incident in a letter to his lifelong correspondent, Sir Horace Mann. Walpole wrote:

The other day they seized an odd man who goes by the name of the Count St Germain. He has been here these two years, and will not tell who he is or whence, but professes that he does not go by his right name. He sings and plays on the violin wonderfully, is mad and not very sensible.

At a time when English xenophobia was at an all-time high because many foreigners, especially Frenchmen were known to be sympathetic to the Jacobite cause, the Count should have been imprisoned. But instead, he was released. Just why this occurred is still a mystery. One curious report that circulated at the time claimed that the Count used hypnotic suggestion to 'persuade' his detainers that he was innocent. This is a real possibility,

because, true enough, Anton Mesmer, who is credited with the discovery of hypnotism, stated years before that the Count possessed a 'vast understanding of the workings of the human mind' and had been directly responsible for teaching him the art of hypnosis.

In 1756, the Count was spotted by Sir Robert Clive in India, and in 1760, history records that King Louis XV sent Monsieur St Germain to The Hague to help settle the peace treaty between Prussia and Austria. In 1762, the Count took part in the deposition of Peter III of Russia and took an active role in bringing Catherine the Great to the throne.

Count St Germain opened a mass-production factory in Venice in 1769 where he developed a synthetic form of silk. During this period he also executed several magnificent sculptures in the tradition of the classical Greeks. A year later he was again active in interfering in the politics of other nations; this time he was seen in the uniform of a Russian General with Prince Alexei Orloff in Leghorn!

After the death of Louis XV in 1774, the man from nowhere turned up unexpectedly in Paris and warned the new monarch, King Louis XVI and his Queen, Marie Antoinette of the approaching danger of the French Revolution, which he described as a 'gigantic conspiracy' that would overthrow the order of things. Of course, the warning went unheeded, and among the final entries in her diary, Marie Antoinette recorded her regret at not taking the Count's advice.

In February 1784, Prince Charles of Hesse-Cassel, Germany, announced the news that the Count was dead, and was to be buried at the local church in Eckenforde. Among the crowds that attended the fueneral service were many prominent occultists, including Count Cagliostro, Anton Mesmer, and the philosopher Louis St Martin.

The coffin was lowered into the grave, and many of the mourners sobbed at what seemed so unbelievable; the death of the immortal count. But that is not the end of the story.

A year later, in 1785 a congress of Freemasons was held in Paris. Among the Rosicrucians, Kabbalists and Illuminati was the supposedly dead Count St Germain.

Thirty-six years after his funeral, the Count was seen by scores of people in in Paris. These included the diarist Mademoiselle d'Adhemar, and the educationalist Madame de Genlis. Both women said the Count still looked like a forty-five year-old.

In 1870 the Emperor Napoleon III was so fascinated by the reports of 'The Undying Count' he ordered a special commission to be set up at the Hotel de Ville to investigate the nobleman. But the findings of the commission never came to a conclusion, because in 1871, an mysterious fire of unknown origin gutted the Hotel de Ville, destroying every document that related to the self-styled count.

The Count St Germain was briefly seen in Milan in 1877, attending a meeting of the Grand Lodge of Freemasons.

In 1896, the theosophist Annie Besant said she had met the Count, and around the same year, Russian theosophist Madame Blavatsky said the Count had been in contact with her, and she proclaimed that he belonged to a race of immortals who lived in an subterranean country called Shambhala, north of the Himalayas.

In 1897, the French singer Emma Calve also claimed that the Count St Germain had paid her a visit, and she called him a 'great chiromancer' who had told her many truths.

The story of the immortal count went out of vogue at the beginning of the Twentieth century - until August 1914, in the early days of World War One. Two Bavarian soldiers captured a Jewish-looking Frenchman in Alsace. During the all-night interrogation, the prisoner of war stubbornly refused to give his name. Suddenly, in the early hours of the morning, the unidentified Frenchman got very irritable and started to rant about the futility of the war. He told his captors, "Throw down your guns! The war will end in 1918 with defeat for the German nation and her allies!"

One of the soldiers, Andreas Rill, laughed at the prisoner's words. He thought that the man was merely expressing the hopes of every Frenchman, but he was intrigued by the prisoner's other prophecies...

"Everyone will be a millionaire after the war! There will be so much money in circulation, people will throw it from windows and no one will bother to pick it up. You will need to carry it around in wheelbarrows to buy a loaf!" the Frenchman predicted. Was he referring to the rampant inflation of post-WWI Germany?

The soldiers scoffed at the prediction. They let the prophet ramble on. He gave them more future-history lessons: "After the confetti money will come the Antichrist. A tyrant from the lower classes who will wear an ancient symbol. He will lead Germany into another global war in 1939, but will be defeated six years on after doing inhuman, unspeakable things.

The Frenchman then started to become incoherent. He started to sing, then began to sob. Thinking he was mad, the soldiers decided to let him go, and he disappeared back into obscurity. His identity is stil unknown. Could he have been the Count St Germain?

Today, most historians regard the Count St Germain as nothing more than a silver-tongued charlatan. But there are so many unanswered questions. What was the source of the Count's wealth? How can we possibly explain his longevity? For that matter, where did he come from? If he had been an impostor, surely someone would have recognized him.

The only surviving manuscript written by the Count, entitled, *La Tres Sainte Trinosophie* is in the library at Troyes, France, and to date, it has resisted every attempt to be fully deciphered, but one decoded section of the text states:

We moved through space at a speed that can only be compared with nothing but itself. Within a fraction of a second the plains below us were out of sight and the Earth had become a faint nebula."

What does this signify? Could it be that the Count St Germain was some type of traveller in the realms of space and time? A real-life Doctor Who? A renegade timelord from the future who liked to meddle with history? If this were so, perhaps he really had talked with Christ and the kings of bygone days. Was the Count a type of vampire? I personally don't believe St Germain was, but he does exemplify the possibility of beings on this earth with incredible lifespans. Who knows if there are evil beings at large in the world today who have been around for centuries? This brings me back to the entity that troubled the household in Camden, London, in the 1960s. With holy water, a crucifix, and most importantly, his faith, a young priest confronted a spine-chilling man in a white periwig and a long flowing white cloak who materialised almost every night in the home of a Baroness who did charity work for the poor of East London. The attacks always happened after midnight, and the vampiric entity would be heard creeping down the stairs of the house from the attic. The first casualty was a 17-year-old girl named Claudia who had been rescued from the streets of London by the Baroness after running away from her violent father in Nottingham. Claudia was awakened at around 12.40am by what she initially believed to be kisses to her neck. She found an oddly-dressed stranger leaning over her, gently biting her neck. The girl screamed and the stranger clamped a cold hand over her mouth and gazed into her eyes. Claudia felt lethargic and all

fear left her. The man bit her neck again and sucked the blood from her for an indeterminable period of time before Claudia drifted into a strange dreamless sleep.

The same thing happened to a woman in her fifties staying at the house. Her name was Bridget and she managed to close her eyes, so the vampire's hypnotic gaze couldn't silence her. The stranger muttered something in a foreign tongue and stormed out of the room. Bridget awoke one morning with a deep cut to the left of her throat that wouldn't stop bleeding for almost an hour. Three nights later a woman in her thirties who cooked at the house woke up just after midnight to the sensation of someone biting into her breast. 'Jesus protect me!' she cried, and felt the thing rise off her in the darkness, followed by the heavy slamming of the bedroom door. One morning at 4am the vampire appeared in the room of the Baroness herself and she bravely asked him what he wanted, and after standing at her bedside for a minute in silence, he suddenly smiled, then left. The priest who was called in to deal with this unusual persecutor held a vigil at the house each night for a week – and then the cloaked menace put in an appearance in Claudia's room. The girl threw a Bible at the unearthly visitor and he fled onto the landing and down the stairs. The priest investigating the vampire reports had been patrolling the landings and saw the shadowy figure in the white periwig hurrying towards him. The priest produced his crucifix and held it out at the weird intruder, and he came to a halt. By the feeble light of a lamppost shining into the house, the clergyman could see that the vampire was a swarthy long-nosed man with intense dark eyes. He was staring at the small silver crucifix in abject fear. The pries took out a small bottle of blessed water, lifted it to his mouth, and removed the cork with his teeth. The vampire backed away, sensing what was to come. The holy water was hurled at the man in black, and he screamed and turned to hurl himself through the panes and frame of a window. The vampire crashed through wood and glass and landed in the street below – apparently without harm – for he picked himself up and ran off into the rainy night. The priest bravely tried to pursue the bloodsucker but the vampire was too agile and at one point he bounded over an eight-foot-tall wall and escaped. He never returned to the home of the Baroness, and his identity remains a mystery, although the priest, later seeing an engraving of the so-called immortal Count of St Germain, believed he was the vampire he had tackled that rainy night in the 1960s.

Vampires are still being reported today. Google “Birmingham Vampire” to see what I mean – or enter “Chupacabra” into a search engine and you will read copious internet reports of a creature that sucks blood out of animals yet seems to be invisible. Many people refuse to believe in ghosts until they encounter one, but knowing what I know about the vampire, I hope the reader will never encounter one, unless of course, you wish to become one yourself one day. Sleep well.

Tom Slemen

Vampires of the Life Force

When I was a child, adults confidently reassured me that vampires such as the legendary Dracula do not and never did exist. Today I know the grown-ups were wrong to dismiss the bloodsuckers. Believe me, vampires do exist, although there are two varieties of them nowadays; fake and genuine. Firstly, there are cults in several major cities (notably San Francisco and London) in which members drink each others blood and the blood of sacrificed people and animals. This isn't a very good idea in the AIDS era, but a cursory browse of the Internet will list many of these vampiric sects. Without a doubt, a lot of the blood-drinkers undoubtedly indulge in this type of vampirism for erotic reasons, but throughout history, from the days of the ancient Egyptians to the present, there have been many well-documented reports of real vampires attacking and subduing victims.

We don't have to go back thousands of years to examine reports of these strange beings, because there have been several vampire alerts in modern times, and they are still being reported today. On 16 April 1922, a man was admitted to London's Charing Cross Hospital with a strange deep wound in his neck. All the man could remember was that he had been turning a corner off Coventry Street when he felt an agonizing stabbing sensation in his neck. Then he passed out. He saw no attacker, so the police had nothing to go on. A few hours later, another man was brought into the hospital - with a wound on his neck. He too had felt a sharp pain in his neck before losing consciousness - at the very same turning off Coventry Street near Piccadilly Circus. This second victim was also unable to give a description of his assailant because there had been no one within twenty feet of him when something penetrated his neck.

Incredibly, a third patient was later taken to Charing Cross Hospital, and he too had a deep wound to his neck - which he had received at the same corner in Coventry Street where the previous two incidents had occurred. The People newspaper covered the strange story, and rumours of a vampire at large in the West End of the capital spread like wildfire. Alas, the invisible Coventry Street attacker was never apprehended by Scotland Yard, but the case has all the hallmarks of a true vampire assault. I have looked at the case in more detail later in this book.

Contrary to popular belief, not all vampires are shape-shifters who turn into bats and fly off in search of victims; although the dark talent of such metamorphosis was described by Bram Stoker in his 1897 novel Dracula. From the data we have on actual vampire attacks, it would seem that many of these strange bloodthirsty beings have the ability to 'teleport' themselves about either in physical form, or by somehow projecting their 'wraith', or astral body to the victim's home. Furthermore, there seem to be a species of vampire that rarely bites the victim to imbibe blood. Instead, the vampire usually 'draws off' the very life-energy of the victim, leaving them physically and mentally exhausted and quite ill. In fact, the symptoms of a subtle vampire assault are identical to a strange condition that is now becoming increasingly prevalent in the civilized world: 'ME' - short for myalgic encephalomyelitis. This is a benign but debilitating (and often long-lasting) condition which allegedly occurs out of the blue, and causes headaches, weakness, muscular pain, extreme fatigue and even fever. Over 150,000 people in Britain are affected by this enigmatic condition, and for some obscure reason, most of the sufferers are women. The medical authorities still cannot agree amongst themselves about the nature of ME. Some doctors think the condition is psychosomatic (originating in the mind), while other experts believe the syndrome has a link with the coxsackieviruses in the human body. Whatever the cause, the strange incapacitating condition is reaching pandemic proportions all over the world.

No one had even heard of ME in 1970, but in the summer of that year, a 19-year-old girl from Winsford, Cheshire, named Judith, was stricken with ME-like symptoms. A doctor examined the teenager, and initially diagnosed flu, but the girl returned a week later, accompanied by her mother. Judith was very pale and lethargic, and had a number of purple marks on her neck and breasts. The GP recognised the discolorations as 'love bites' and surmised that the girl was suffering from a form of glandular fever that is quite common from ‘French kissing’. However, Judith's mother told the doctor about her daughter's screaming fits in the dead of night and the strange lucid nightmares that haunted the girl's sleep.

Judith's accounts of her night terror resulted in her being referred to a psychiatrist named Dr Michael Dwerringwood. Judith told him that once midnight arrived, she felt a sinister cold presence invading her bedroom.

Then a young man in black would appear at the foot of her bed, leering at the teenager, who was often paralysed with fear.

‘Who is this man?’ Dwerringwood inquired, and Judith told him that it was a foreign-looking art student from her neighbourhood named Lazzlo. Judith said that there was something attractive but eerie about him. She then went into detail about the first 'assault' in her bedroom. Judith claimed, 'I was just nodding off when I felt a cold hand stroking my breasts. I opened my eyes and the room was in darkness, but someone was on top of me in the bed, and he was kissing biting my neck, and I was so frightened I couldn't move or cry out. I closed my eyes and hoped I was just having a nightmare, but when I opened them he was still there. From the light of the lamppost shining into my bedroom I saw his face. It was Lazzlo.'

The young man in question, Lazzlo Ordog, was a 23-year-old Hungarian art student. He was quite tall; over six-foot-four in height - and was olive skinned with black slicked-back hair and a lively pair of dark brown probing eyes.

Dr Dwerringwood asked Judith what her relationship with her father was like, as he suspected him of being the nocturnal culprit who came into her bedroom, but it transpired that the girl's father had died several years before. The psychiatrist therefore asked if any uncles or male relatives were staying at Judith's house. The only male on the premises was Judith's 6-year-old brother Graham; a typical prepubescent boy who had no time for girls.

Then came the bizarre twist in this intriguing case. Another girl in Judith's neighbourhood was also referred to Dwerringwood. The girl, named Zara, had just turned sixteen, and her body displayed the same cluster of love-bites on the neck and breasts. Zara also exhibited the same apathetic symptoms as Judith, and stranger still, this girl also tremblingly related how a 'ghost' got into bed with her on some nights and tried to have sex with her. Dwerringwood asked Zara to describe this ghost, and the girl's descriptions matched Judith's in every detail. The apparition was of a handsome but spooky man with black hair and penetrating eyes.

Dwerringwood asked Zara if she had perhaps been having a nightmare, but the girl insisted she had been awake throughout the nightly ordeals which stretched back months. The psychiatrist then asked the girl if she knew of any person who resembled the man who came to attack her in her bed, and the girl said she did know of such a person. She said that she had

seen a tall man who looked identical to the man who had practically raped her in the wee small hours. Zara didn't know the man's name, but she knew the street where he lived, and that was the very same street where Lazzlo Ordog was residing. The police were powerless to quiz the Hungarian on the strength of such a bizarre testimony from the teenaged girls, but Dwerringwood decided out of curiosity to break with protocol and pay a visit to Lazzlo himself.

The landlady who ran the small boarding house admitted the psychiatrist into the hall and called down Mr Ordog to see him. The student descended the stairs silently and furtively with a half-smile, and he gave the disquieting impression that he had been expecting Dwerringwood to call. The psychiatrist introduced himself to Ordog and asked if he could speak to him in private for a few minutes. The student simply nodded and beckoned Dwerringwood to follow him up to his quarters in the attic of the old lodging house. Lazzlo was evidently using the attic digs as his studio. There were several canvases propped up on easles. All of the pictures were of female nudes, and most were incomplete, but Dwerringwood was intrigued to see two finished watercolour paintings lying side by side in the corner of the room. The subjects of these paintings were two girls who bore an uncanny resemblance to Judith and Zara.

Dwerringwood asked the tall wiry artist who had posed for the two paintings but Lazzlo said he had painted the girls from his imagination. The psychiatrist got straight to the point and told Lazzlo how he was the bogeyman haunting the dreams of two troubled teenagers. He added that both girls had identified Lazzlo as the night visitor, and then asked him if he had any theories why the girls were dreaming of him. The Hungarian couldn't maintain eye-contact with the psychiatrist for some reason, and after shrugging to Dwerringwood's question, he busied himself with the arrangement of his tubes of paints. Then, in an irritated manner he suddenly said: 'Girls are crazy!' The psychiatrist felt very uneasy being alone with the art student, and decided to leave.

As he reached the door, Lazzlo turned and said: 'What do you think of the girls' stories? Do you believe them?' Dwerringwood felt the hairs stand up on the back of his neck. He didn't turn around. Instead he left, answering, 'I don't know.'

When the psychiatrist returned home, he found his cat dead on the doorstep. There were no signs of physical injury on the cat's body, so

Dwerringwood took it to the vet, who was a friend of his. The vet could not establish why the cat had died, but the psychiatrist felt his pet's death was somehow connected to the sinister Hungarian painter.

On the following night as Dwerringwood was watching the late news on TV, the mirror above his fireplace split in half with a loud crack. Dwerringwood could not explain the cracked mirror, and later that same night when he retired to bed, the psychiatrist distinctly caught a glimpse of a man's silhouette standing at the top of his stairs. The shadow-like figure vanished a split-second after Dwerringwood glanced at it, but it looked like Lazzlo Ordog's outline. The psychiatrist knew he had not imagined the figure, even though its transient appearance flew in the face of reason.

Dwerringwood never told his fiancée Glynis about the strange incidents or about the mysterious Hungarian, but one night she was lying in bed with the psychiatrist when she woke up choking. She felt a pair of powerful ice-cold hands wrapped around her throat, throttling her. As soon as Glynis managed to scream out, the strangling sensation instantly ceased. She was so sure there was an attacker in the bedroom, Glynis jumped out of bed and rushed to switch on the light, but there was nobody there.

Dwerringwood racked his brains wondering what he was up against. He was a man of scientific rationality, and he felt out of his depth tackling the menacing Lazzlo Ordog. One afternoon a bizarre thought dawned on him: what if the Hungarian was some sort of - vampire?

It was a far-fetched thought to Dwerringwood, but the more he thought about the Hungarian, the less ludicrous his theory seemed. The psychiatrist obtained two copies of the Bible and bought three small crucifixes. He left one copy of the Bible in Judith's bedroom and left the other copy in Zara's bedroom. He also gave the girls a crucifix each and told them to wear the cross when they went to bed. Dwerringwood wore the third crucifix on a chain about his neck, and when he went to bed, he turned off the lamp and settled down, ready to sleep. Then a low gruff voice seething with hate whispered in his ear: 'I'll break your neck one day.' The voice sounded as if it came from someone standing at the bedside. For as long as Judith and Zara wore the crucifixes and left the Bibles in their rooms, they enjoyed a quiet night's sleep, regained their zeal for living, and the purple contusions quickly faded from their bodies.

Some time later, Dwerringwood went to the lodging house to see Lazzlo again. This time the psychiatrist carried a Bible and wore his crucifix, ready

to confront the creepy young man, but Lazzlo had left. The landlady said he had moved out during the night without giving her a forwarding address. Dwerringwood's experiment with the Bibles and crucifixes seemed to do the job, and yet for many years afterwards, he tried to rationalize the whole vampire episode, and wondered if it had just been a case of hysteria, autosuggestion and coincidence.

Curiously, in October 1991, there was a haunting reported in Winsford. In the very house where the teenager Judith had lived in the 1970s, a young woman awoke one dark morning at four o'clock and saw a man in black with his arms stretched out floating close to the ceiling directly above her bed. The woman was naturally terrified at the levitating phantom in black, and she hid under the covers of her bed, quaking with fear. She summoned enough courage to have another look up at the ceiling, and she saw that the black-clad figure had vanished. One wonders if the hovering entity was Lazzlo on the prowl again. According to the acupuncturists of ancient China, the health of a person depended on the life-force ch'i. If ch'i did not flow smoothly and harmoniously through the body, physical and mental sickness were said to result. Ch'i was regarded as the very essence of the soul, and was said to circulate in the body under the skin through a series of specific channels known as meridians. Recent scientific research has proved beyond a doubt that the human body is buzzing with electric fields, and furthermore, any interference with these fields can have serious repercussions in the state of a person's health. It has been proven for example, that children living in close proximity to electric pylons and electrical substations are highly likely to develop leukaemia, because strong electromagnetic fields have a detrimental effect on the human body's immune system. Perhaps this is how Lazzlo and others of his kind prey on their victims; by sapping the very essence of their life-energy, or ch'i, as the Chinese and Western acupuncturists call it. For all we know, the parasitic vampires may be at large at this very moment in our society, draining the energy of their unsuspecting victims. Would this explain the explosion in recent years of ME cases?

Another case of a psychic vampire attack allegedly took place at Swindon in the 1980s. In the summer of 1981, a 25-year-old woman named Sarah went to live in Deacon Street, Swindon, to look after her 75-year-old auntie Esther, who was recovering from a mild stroke. One night at around 11.45pm, Sarah retired to bed, and had difficulty sleeping because of the

humid summer night. She opened the window and saw a full moon hanging over the horizon, then returned to her bed and settled down to try and sleep on top of the duvet. A few minutes later, Sarah had the eerie feeling she was being watched, and she opened her eyes and glanced at the open window. A dark shape flitted away from the window, and Sarah knew it wasn't an optical illusion because it momentarily blocked the moonlight pouring into the room and cast a shadow that flitted across the bed.

Sarah got up off the bed, closed the window, and lay back on the bed, wondering what had passed the window. To allay any thoughts of the thing being something supernatural, she decided (rather unrealistically) that a moth had fluttered past her eyes. However, at ten minutes past midnight Sarah turned in the bed and looked towards the bedroom door – and saw something which was to haunt her for the rest of her life.

Sarah noticed a dark shape sliding silently under her door. As she squinted in the moonlit room, she could discern the surreal sight of what looked like a flat two-dimensional cut-out of a man's silhouette, sliding steadily through the centimetre-high gap under the door. Sarah raised herself from the pillow and sat on the edge of the bed, gazing at the bizarre spectacle in absolute terror. She had an urge to run out of the bedroom but that would mean walking over the crawling shadow. That shadow suddenly rose up from the carpet and instantly materialised into the three-dimensional solid form of a man in a long black robe of some sort. Sarah felt weak with fear, and she threw her arms up defensively as she fell back onto the bed. She passed out, and when she regained consciousness, Sarah saw the time was now almost four in the morning. She felt so drained of energy she could hardly draw breath, and her head slumped back onto the pillow until the light of dawn seeped into the room. Sarah eventually rose from her bed at 10am and found her cousin Lisa downstairs looking after Aunt Esther. Lisa had tried to wake Sarah several times without success, and when she saw her stagger downstairs, she asked her what the matter was. Sarah said she felt weak and dizzy then collapsed. An ambulance took her to hospital were she was subsequently diagnosed with a type of chronic-fatigue syndrome that was said to have been caused by the exhaustion Sarah had experienced from constantly caring for her sick aunt. Sarah disputed the diagnosis, as she felt as if something had somehow literally siphoned off the energy in her body, and she felt it had something to do with the 'ghost' that had entered her bedroom from under the door. On another occasion, this

time at Sarah's home on Crombey Street, about half a mile from her aunt's house, the sinister apparition manifested again. This time, Sarah did not pass out when the entity materialised, and on this occasion the incident was also witnessed by Sarah's 17-year-old brother Russell. At 9.45pm on Wednesday 12 August, 1981, Russell came into his sister's bedroom asking for money to go to the local fish and chips shop. Sarah was sitting at a dresser as she put on her make up, and was complaining about the way Russell entered her bedroom without knocking first, when brother and sister suddenly saw the instantaneous appearance of a tall man in a long black cloak who seemed to walk from the side of the wardrobe. Sarah let out a scream and threw a hairdryer at the alarming phantom before rushing out the bedroom with Russell in close pursuit. The parents of Sarah and Russell barged into the bedroom when they heard the garbled account of their siblings' description of the cloaked man, but found no one there. Sarah dreaded sleeping in her bedroom after that encounter, but thankfully the menacing figure never bothered her again. The apparition was never identified, and seems to have been some type of vampiric being that had been siphoning off Sarah's vitality. One wonders if the entity is still at large.

These vampires that draw off the very life-force of their victims are reminiscent of the incubus and succubus of Judaeo-Christian belief. An incubus is a male demonic being that lies on top of female sleepers at night and sexually abuses them. It also drains the victim of energy so she is unable to even call out for help. The incubus often takes on the form of an attractive young human male, whereas its female counterpart - the succubus – often resembles a voluptuous, attractive woman, but, it seems there are other nocturnal entities haunting our bedrooms, and the most widely-reported of these is known as the 'Old Hag'.

'Old Hag Syndrome' has been recognised by psychologists for many years, but no one is sure whether the cause is supernatural or simply the product of a half-awake mind. Victims wake up in bed to find that they cannot move, even though they can see, hear, feel and smell. They often experience the feeling of a great weight on their chest and sense that there is a sinister or evil presence in the room. This presence sometimes manifests itself as an old hag with evil-looking eyes, hence the name of this syndrome. In 2003, a 27-year-old man named Tony woke at his home in the Kensington district of Liverpool, Merseyside, at three in the morning and found himself unable to move a muscle. He panicked, as he struggled to

breathe, then he opened his eyes - and saw an old woman with a black shawl leaning over him. She started to cackle, and she started to stroke Tony's face with what felt like bony fingers. The face of the night visitor looked very sinister, and the woman muttered something unintelligible. She leaned forward and began to kiss Tony, and a terrible stench filled his nostrils. He tried desperately to regain the power of movement, and he suddenly screamed out and pushed away the eerie figure. The old hag was nowhere to be seen.

Six days after that report, there was a second Old Hag report about two miles from the first incident. A 45-year-old Liverpool man named George retired to his bedroom at 10 pm. His wife remained downstairs ironing clothes. She said she'd be coming up to bed in about an hour. However, at around 11 o'clock that night, George was awakened by someone climbing into the bed. He turned to cuddle his wife and found no one there. George thought perhaps he'd been dreaming, and he laid back to relax. As he was about to drop off asleep, George felt something heavy pushing down on his chest. He opened his eyes - and found himself paralysed from head to toe. A dark shape was on top of him. George later stated that he felt as if the presence *was stealing the life out of him*, and that if he didn't fight it he'd die. An unsightly face leaned over his face. It was the face of a very old woman with evil staring eyes. George could see a flickering golden light in those eyes. The woman put her mouth to George's mouth and her breath smelt rancid. The putrid breath seemed to fill his head. George had classed himself as an atheist, but that night he called upon God to save him from the evil hag. The wrinkled face grimaced as if in great pain, and then the eyes turned completely white.

The weight was lifted from George, and the hag vanished into thin air. George felt movement return to his big toe, then the whole of his leg and the rest of his body in turn. He raised himself up and leaned against the bed's headboard, gasping for breath. His heart pounded. He looked about, and saw the room was empty. George then ran down the stairs to tell his wife about the ghastly experience. She immediately noticed a strong putrescent odour, and sniffed his mouth. George then realised the hag had been no dream. He gargled with a mouthwash and brushed his teeth repeatedly until the horrid vestiges of the hag's kiss had gone.

There were two further incidents of this kind, reported days later in other areas of Merseyside, and both victims of these eerie assaults gave a

carbon copy description of the old hag who had terrorised the two men in the earlier cases. The victims also mentioned smelling an unpleasant odour during the assaults. Weeks after these four cases, there came a cluster of reports of the Old Hag in the neighbouring county of Cheshire, and herein lies a peculiarity of this phenomenon; the hag syndrome is rarely reported as a widespread occurrence, but instead, there are a number of highly localised incidents reported, sometimes in the same street, and this is difficult to explain in terms of traditional psychology. Suggestion and hysteria could undoubtedly be cited as the cause if two or more people knew about the hag being reported several doors away, but in most cases, people have not reported it to neighbours, but to a doctor, and he or she has treated the report in the strictest confidence. Is the hag just the modern interpretation for a type of vampire that has been at large for centuries? What purpose would the hag serve if she was not vampiric? Why does she drain people of energy and the power of movement? Could she be a parasitic entity rather than the demonic being most Occultist believe her to be?

In 1992 there was a classic case of a psychic vampire reported at Cardiff. A 34-year-old secretary named Jane Williams had recurring nightmares of a man in black floating in through her bedroom window each night, and in the dreams the man would put his mouth to Jane's lips and suck the breath from her lungs until she would wake up, gasping for air. After a week of such nightmares, Jane woke up one night trembling in her Wharton Street home to see the shadowy outline of a man hovering over her bed. She let out a scream and the weird apparition dissolved before her eyes. The man in the nightmares had a distinctive face with unusually dark menacing eyes and a white-streaked quiff. One afternoon in October 1992, Jane was returning from work when she encountered this man on Queen Street. She stopped in her tracks when she saw the man of her nightmares, and before she turned to run off, she heard him utter something unintelligible. Jane suffered two further nightmares at the house on Wharton Street, and on both occasions, awoke gasping for breath and feeling completely exhausted. Jane went to stay at her sister's home in Caerphilly, and after two nights of peaceful sleep, the nightmares returned with a vengeance. Jane awoke screaming in the spare bedroom and her sister Claudia ran to her help. Upon entering the bedroom, Claudia saw a dark amorphous shape, almost like a cloud of black smoke, roll along the

ceiling and vanish into the drawn curtains. A Methodist lay-preacher was finally enlisted to tackle the sinister supernatural nocturnal assailant, and it was found that as long as Jane had a crucifix at her bedside, she was not troubled by the nightmares and accompanying assaults by the man in black. The lay preacher believed the invader of Jane's bedroom was a demon, but Jane described the familiar symptoms of the kind reported in the aftermath of an attack by a psychic vampire; shortness of breath, complete exhaustion, and a sensation of dread. An almost identical case of a vaporous vampiric being was reported on a housing estate in Exeter in 2005, only on this occasion, the apparition was said to be wearing a tuxedo! The victim was once again female, and the attack took place around 11pm in an attic. Sandra, 39-year-old mother of two teenaged children, Becky, aged 13, and Zara, aged 15, had converted the attic of her home into a study, with bookshelves and a computer. Sandra's daughters used the den to surf the net most evenings, but one Sunday night, when Becky and Zara were sound asleep in bed, Sandra decided to go upstairs and send an email to a friend from the attic computer. As she sat typing out the email, she suddenly felt as if something was in the attic with her. A floorboard creaked, and Sandra felt goosebumps rise involuntarily on her arms. She distinctly heard someone sigh quite close, and suddenly, out the corner of her eye, she saw a man in a black dinner jacket and matching trousers standing there. He wore a bow tie, and his hair was dark and slicked back. Sandra was instantly paralysed, and she could hear her heart pounding with fear as she sat at the computer, unable to move. The stranger's face was pallid, and his eyes were abnormally large and black as coal. He walked silently to the terror-stricken mum, then began to kiss her neck and face, and Sandra literally felt as if the sinister man was drawing her very life from her. She became so weak she felt sick, and after blacking out, she woke up about twenty-five minutes later and found herself on the floor of the attic. Sandra told her best friend, Julie, who worked as a tutor at the local university, and Julie in turn told an amateur investigator of the paranormal named Allan Moore. Allan claimed that the unearthly life-draining ghost in the dinner jacket was a type of psychic vampire who had been preying on people in the Topsham Road area – and that was the very neighbourhood where Sandra lived. Sandra's daughters were not told about the man in the tuxedo for obvious reasons, so Sandra shuddered when both girls reported seeing the silhouette of a man against the blinds of their bedroom all hours in the morning. Allan Moore

resorted to the traditional remedies for protecting victims against vampires; he left garlic bulbs, crucifixes and bottles of holy water in the attic and bedrooms of Sandra's home, and these measures seem to have done the trick, for the man in the tuxedo with the chalk-white face was seen no more by Sandra and her daughters.

The cases of vampires of the life-force documented so far within this chapter occurred in this century and the last one, but some of the most terrifying incidents of this kind first took place in 19th century London. Standing 68 feet high on London's Thames Embankment is a 180-ton obelisk of red granite that dates back fourteen centuries to the reign of Thutmose III, the sixth Pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty. This tall, tapering four-sided monument, which ends in a pyramidal top, had nothing to do with Queen Cleopatra VII of Egypt, yet the obelisk is known as Cleopatra's Needle for some reason. In 1819, Mehemet Ali, the viceroy of Egypt, presented the 'needle' to Britain to commemorate the victorious battles of Nelson and Abercromby. However, the obelisk remained at Alexandria in Egypt until 1877, when the first attempt was made to ship it to England. The obelisk was dug out of the sands that had covered most of it for over a thousand years, and many Egyptian labourers involved in the excavation believed something evil was residing in the needle, for there were superstitions rife in that part of Egypt about Sekhmet – a fierce vampiress who was worshipped by a blood-drinking cult dating back thousands of years to the 12th Dynasty. Sekhmet was originally known as the Egyptian goddess of war, but even in times of peace she was feared because of her bloodlust. She was depicted as a female with a lion's mane, a beautiful pale face with large black penetrating eyes, and a fanged mouth. She was always robed in scarlet, and was known by various titles, such as The Mistress of Dread and the Lady of Slaughter. In the ancient myths, Sekhmet was said to have almost destroyed all of mankind on one occasion because of her bloodlust. Ra, the sun-god of Upper Egypt was said to have tricked her into drinking a bloodlike liquid which was in fact pomegranate juice mixed with beer. The vampire goddess then fell into a long slumber and was finally transformed into the gentle deity Hathor. However, the truth behind this allegorical tale is much more sinister. Sekhmet was said to have been temporarily 'tamed' by Egyptian High Priests who used Sumerian exorcism rites. It was said that only the wraith, or psychic shell of Sekhmet

survived the exorcism, and that the feeble but deadly vestige of this violent lover of blood had sought sanctuary in the fallen obelisk of Thutmose III.

On 14 October 1877, the ship carrying the obelisk to England capsized during a fierce storm in the Bay of Biscay, and six lives were lost as a result. The obelisk was finally brought to England in January 1878, and it was subsequently erected on the Victoria Embankment in September of that year. Hidden within the pedestal of Cleopatra's Needle there is a rather interesting time capsule from Victorian times containing a full set of British Empire coins, a rupee, a 3-inch model of the monument and plans of the obelisk on velum, plus a Bradshaw Railway Guide booklet, a shilling razor, a portrait of Queen Victoria, a box of cigars, a collection of children's toys, and twelve photographs of the most beautiful women of the day.

A naked man was seen jumping into the Thames close to the obelisk, weeks after its erection. The body of the suicide was later recovered from the river but never identified. Not long after this, rumours began to circulate about a strange power emanating from Cleopatra's Needle which could cause people to jump into the Thames. Miss Davies, a 27-year-old woman from Pimlico left her home one night in 1880 and wandered the streets of London in a morose trance. Upon reaching the Victorian Embankment, she felt a 'magnetic' force draw her to the obelisk, where she heard the eerie sounds of female laughter. Davies found herself walking towards the ancient monolith, and was unable to control her legs. She jumped into the river, but was rescued by a young vagrant. Miss Davies gradually recovered from her ordeal in hospital, but suffered terrible nightmares of an abnormally tall woman in dark red robes with a terrifying white face and black almond-shaped eyes. Each time this disturbing figure appeared in the dreams, Miss Davies would find herself paralysed with fear, and the entity would slowly open an enormous mouth to reveal an array of pointed teeth. The figure would then move steadily towards the dreamer and bite into her face, tearing off strips of her flesh. Fortunately, the nightmares ended after a fortnight, but Miss Davies believed the cannibalistic woman was not merely a figment of her dream, but something truly evil connected with the obelisk on the Embankment. Could the woman in the scarlet robes be the vampiric goddess Sekhmet? Many men and women from all classes and walks of life have since chosen to end their lives by jumping into the Thames close to Cleopatra's Needle, and even the police have remarked on the 'popularity'

of the suicide spot. Could an ancient vampire be causing people to drown themselves to somehow live off the very life-energy of the suicides?

Early English Vampires

Of all the forms of interaction between the living and the dead, visitation by a vampire is the most loathsome. Some occultists debate whether a vampire is truly alive, with a conscious mind of the type you and I possess, or whether it is as 'alive' as a parasitic virus or a thirsty mosquito that is devoid of a conscience, living solely to siphon off the life-blood of its human host. I believe that vampires have varying degrees of consciousness, ranging from the type of perception a maggot may have of its surroundings, right up to the standards of awareness that are characteristic of the human mind. Of course, some people simply believe that vampires do not exist at all, based on what we vaguely term as 'common sense'. Religious people may believe that a man cannot rise from his grave after dark, yet accept that the founder of Christianity did such a thing at the Resurrection. That is not to say that Jesus was a vampire, but it does throw some light on the way our belief-system works. It would seem that from the large amount of data I have accumulated on vampires, they are mostly cryptobiotic – that is to say, they possess an ametabolic state of life which responds to environmental conditions such as freezing, desiccation, and even oxygen deficiency. In other words, the vampire can possibly survive underwater, can live much longer in a hostile desert condition than the most robust of humans, and could even be revived after years of being encased in ice. This cryptobiosis is evident in some of the lower organisms such as the incredible Tardigrade, a tiny segmented creature that looks like a microscopic bear with its bulky body and four pairs of stumpy legs and claws. Tardigrades can live in hot springs, in the snows of the Himalayas, at the bottom of the ocean, and can even endure an intense bombardment of X-Rays (one thousand times the dose that is lethal to humans). Not only can the Tardigrade survive in the vacuum of space, it can also 'suspend' its metabolism indefinitely through dehydration and 'come back to life' decades later. In recent years a piece of moss in a museum was hydrated after 170 years and Tardigrades from the 1880s were found to have revived themselves. Scientists are currently studying the Tardigrade to see if they can learn how to store human organs designated for transplants for long periods. The DNA of these incredible creatures is also being scrutinised with a view to understanding how it might one day be possible to perhaps

create a human who could be both as resilient and virtually immortal as the Tardigrade. Perhaps nature has already combined the genetic codes of a branch of the human tree with that of a DNA akin to the Tardigrade – and produced the vampire as a result. There are some strange skulls with overdeveloped fangs that have been found in the earth which refuse to be pigeon-holed as pro-simian or proto-human by the anthropologist. The theory of evolution maintains that all the plants and animals existing today descended from species that existed before them, and in 1859, Charles Darwin introduced a very controversial theory about the origins of the human race in his landmark book, *Origin of Species* – that homo sapiens were descendants of an apelike ancestor. In recent years, Darwin's theory of evolution has been questioned by new freethinkers who have pointed out many weak points in the Darwinian hypothesis. There are over 312 physical traits that set humans apart from apes and chimpanzees. We have to take into consideration our virtual hairlessness, our upright way of walking, the complete helplessness of human infancy, our lengthy childhood, and the biggest problem confronting Darwin's theory: the human brain. The brain is one-forty-fifth our body weight. The gorilla has a brain that is one-two-hundredth its body weight. With the exception of the dolphin, our brain is bigger in gross size than any other mammal. According to Darwin, nature never over-endows a creature with more than its basic requirements, yet the cubic capacity of the human brain (which ranges from 1200 to 1800 cc) is in excess of the size needed for everyday survival and procreation. Nature never over-endows a species beyond the demands of everyday existence, yet the human brain has faculties and a cubic capacity far beyond its needs. According to Darwinian theory, mankind should only concern itself with hunting, survival and procreation, yet we have poetry, art, music, literature – things that are a superfluous luxury in our day-to-day struggle for survival. We have a brain that put people on the moon and split the atom, but where did that incredible brainpower come from? Darwin's theory cannot answer that question. What if Darwin was wrong? Perhaps mankind was created by a higher intelligence, as many religions claim, and perhaps there were different versions and prototypes of human; those that were active by day, and those that preferred the night to go about their business. We could call these two contrasting versions of homo sapiens diurnals (daytime people) and nocturnals (night-time people).

For thousands of years, the nocturnal vampire is said to have existed in one form or another, and according to ancient Occult lore, one of the earliest recorded vampires was Lilith, the first wife of Adam – as described in the Talmud. In this alternative version of Genesis, God created Lilith not from the dust he had fashioned Adam from, but from filth and sediment. Adam and Lilith never found peace as a couple; for when he wished to lie down with her, she took offence at the recumbent posture that he demanded. 'Why must I lie beneath you?' she complained, and reminded Adam of their common origins: 'I also was made from dust, and am therefore your equal.'

Because Adam tried to enforce her obedience, Lilith uttered the magic name of God in a rage, rose into the air and left him to be with Lucifer. In essence then, the quarrel was simply this; that Lilith preferred to stand over Adam, but God wanted the male to be the dominant one in the relationship.

'I have been deserted by my helpmeet' Adam complained to his Creator, and God at once sent forth the angels Senoy, Sansenoy and Semangelof to fetch Lilith back, and at the Red Sea, which coursed through a region abounding in lascivious demons, they finally found her. Lilith gave birth to the Lilim at the rate of more than one hundred a day. Perhaps these ancient legends are referring to the early origins of the vampire. This book is about the vampires of England, and some of the earliest references to the bloodthirsty undead are to be found in the works of two medieval writers, Walter Map and William of Newburgh. Walter Map (c.1137-1209) was a Welsh poet and ecclesiastic who had studied at the University of Paris and also became a prominent clerk in the royal household of Henry II. He wrote about many anecdotes and trivia he had accumulated during his travels in *De Nugis Curialium* (*Trifles of Courtiers*). This work contained a mixed bag of odd stories about demonic infanticide, the capture of Jerusalem by Saladin, a comparison of the royal courts with Hell, an early king of Portugal who had his wife murdered, and amongst Map's satirical anecdotes, trivia, and the accounts of court gossip, there are several early tales of English vampires. Writing in the 12th century, Map recounts the curious story of a "wicked man" of Hereford who rose from his grave at night to wander the streets, crying out the names of people he had known when he was alive. The people he called out for became sick and subsequently died within three days from a mysterious fever. Gilbert Foliot, the Bishop of Hereford (and later the Bishop of London) was consulted, and deciding that the ghoul was a vampire revenant – a corpse animated by the

Devil – he gave specific instructions to a band of men to lay the creature to rest. ‘Dig up the body and cut off the head with a spade, then sprinkle it with holy water and rebury it.’

This was attempted but the holy water had no marked effect and the spinal column of the vampire proved too hard to sever. The creature staggered about for a while, then crawled back into its open grave. Before it could claw the earth over its temporary resting place, one of the villagers was brave enough to make a last-ditch attempt at killing the vampire. With all his might he brought down the blade of his sword on the revenant, splitting its skull open. The vampire gave out a strange guttural sound and slumped face down into its grave for good. Holy water and vinegar were then sprinkled on the grave, which was later marked with a Christian cross to prevent the fiend from rising again. In another of the chapters of *De Nugis Curialium* Walter Map recounts a chilling tale of a vampiric demon. A knight discovers that his newborn baby has had its throat cut from ear to ear, hours after its birth. The knight recoils in horror at the sight of his first child lying in its blood-soaked cradle, and cannot discover who has perpetrated the evil deed. The same grisly fate befalls the knight’s next two children, and so, after the birth of the fourth child, a vigil is kept. Torches are lit all over the household and many friends and relatives of the knight keep a close watch on the room where the newborn babe is sleeping in his cradle. An impoverished stranger arrived at the knight’s house seeking hospitality, and was invited into the premises to enjoy a drink, a simple meal, and a place by the fireside. To repay the knight for his hospitality, the stranger agreed to remain awake all night to keep a vigil on the new baby. One by one, the other people of the vigil soon started to fall asleep, but the stranger kept his word and refused to succumb to sleep. In the wee small hours of the morning, the stranger saw ‘a most worthy and honourable matron’ appear in the room, hunched over the cradle. She held the baby by its throat. The guest rushed across the room to apprehend the woman and raised the alarm as he did, waking the people who had lapsed into slumber. Walter Map states that this female child-killer was ‘the noblest of the most respected matrons’ of the city, but he does not identify this wealthy woman who is held in great esteem. The stranger held onto this cruel and murderous woman, and all of a sudden, her double entered the room, looking exactly the same as the child-killer in facial features and even in the clothes she wore. The stranger was a evidently a very perceptive man who

was quite knowledgeable in the Occult, for he suddenly announced to the knight and his confused household

There can be no doubt that the lady who has now come is very virtuous and very dear to heaven, and that by her good works she has stirred hell and provoked the anger of devils against her, and so this evil messenger of theirs, this loathsome instrument of their wrath, has been fashioned as far as possible in the likeness of this noble lady, that this demon may cause this noble soul to be accused of the guilt of her heinous deeds. And in order that you may believe, see what she will do after I release her.

The stranger let go of the struggling doppelgänger of the virtuous lady, and she raised her arms and seem to metamorphose into some winged creature which flapped its wings frantically and flew through the window. This was one of the earliest accounts of a shape-shifting vampire of the kind that was reported many times in the following centuries.

William of Newburgh (1136-1208) was an English chronicler, a canon in the Augustinian priory at Newburgh in the North Riding of Yorkshire, and one of the chief authorities concerning the reign of Henry II. Within his work, *Historia Rerum Anglicarum* (*History of English Affairs*) which covers the period from 1066 to 1198, there are three intriguing accounts of vampiric beings, in chapters 22 , 23 and 24 of Book 5, reproduced here:

Chapter 22

n these days a wonderful event befell in the county of Buckingham, which I, in the first instance, partially heard from certain friends, and was afterwards more fully informed of by Stephen, the venerable archdeacon of that province. A certain man died, and, according to custom, by the honourable exertion of his wife arid kindred, was laid in the tomb on the eve of the Lord's Ascension. On the following night, however, having entered the bed where his wife was reposing, he not only terrified her on awaking, but nearly crushed her by the insupportable weight of his body. The next night, also, he afflicted the astonished woman in the same manner, who, frightened at the danger, as the struggle of the third night drew near, took care to remain awake herself, and surround herself with watchful companions. Still he came; but being repulsed by the shouts of the watchers, and seeing that he was prevented from doing mischief, he departed. Thus driven off from his wife, he harassed in a similar manner his own brothers, who were dwelling in the same street; but they, following the cautious example of the woman, passed the nights in wakefulness with their companions, ready to meet and repel the expected danger. He appeared, notwithstanding, as if with the hope of surprising them should they be overcome with drowsiness; but being repelled by the carefulness and valour of the watchers, he rioted among the animals, both indoors and outdoors, as their wildness and unwonted movements testified.

Having thus become a like serious nuisance to his friends and neighbours, he imposed upon all the same necessity for nocturnal watchfulness; and in that very street a general watch was kept in every house, each being fearful of his approach unawares. After having for some time rioted in this manner during the night-time alone, he began to wander abroad in daylight, formidable indeed to all, but visible only to a few; for oftentimes, on his encountering a number of persons, he would appear to one or two only though at the same time his presence was not concealed from the rest. At length the inhabitants, alarmed beyond measure, thought it advisable to seek the counsel of the church; and they detailed the whole affair, with tearful lamentation, to the above-mentioned archdeacon, at a meeting of the clergy over which he was solemnly presiding. Whereupon he immediately intimated in writing the whole circumstances of the case to the

venerable bishop of Lincoln, who was then resident in London, whose opinion and judgment on so unwonted a matter he was very properly of opinion should be waited for: but the bishop, being amazed at his account, held a searching investigation with his companions; and there were some who said that such things had often befallen in England, and cited frequent examples to show that tranquillity could not be restored to the people until the body of this most wretched man were dug up and burnt. This proceeding, however, appeared indecent and improper in the last degree to the reverend bishop, who shortly after addressed a letter of absolution, written with his own hand, to the archdeacon, in order that it might be demonstrated by inspection in what state the body of that man really was; and he commanded his tomb to be opened, and the letter having been laid upon his breast, to be again closed: so the sepulchre having been opened, the corpse was found as it had been placed there, and the charter of absolution having been deposited upon its breast, and the tomb once more closed, he was thenceforth never more seen to wander, nor permitted to inflict annoyance or terror upon any one.

And here is the next chapter, which describes another report of a possible vampire:

Chapter 23

In the northern parts of England, also, we know that another event, not unlike this and equally wonderful, happened about the same time. At the mouth of the river Tweed, and in the jurisdiction of the king of Scotland, there stands a noble city which is called Berwick. In this town a certain man, very wealthy, but as it afterwards appeared a great rogue, having been buried, after his death sallied forth (by the contrivance, as it is believed, of Satan) out of his grave by night, and was borne hither and thither, pursued by a pack of dogs with loud barkings; thus striking great terror into the neighbours, and returning to his tomb before daylight. After this had continued for several days, and no one dared to be found out of doors after dusk -- for each dreaded an encounter with this deadly monster -- the higher and middle classes of the people held a necessary investigation into what was requisite to he done; the more simple among them fearing, in the event of negligence, to be soundly beaten by this prodigy of the grave; but the wiser shrewdly concluding that were a remedy further delayed, the atmosphere, infected and corrupted by the constant whirlings through it of the pestiferous corpse, would engender disease and death to a great extent; the necessity of providing against which was shown by frequent examples in similar cases. They, therefore, procured ten young men renowned for boldness, who were to dig up the horrible carcass, and, having cut it limb from limb, reduce it into food and fuel for the flames. When this was done, the commotion ceased. Moreover, it is stated that the monster, while it was being borne about (as it is said) by Satan, had told certain persons whom it had by chance encountered, that as long as it remained unburned the people should have no peace. Being burnt, tranquillity appeared to be restored to them; but a pestilence, which arose in consequence, carried off the greater portion of them: for never did it so furiously rage elsewhere, though it was at that time general throughout all the borders of England, as shall be more fully explained in its proper place.

In the chapter that follows this, William documents the ghoulish activities and violent end of a vampiric friar:

Chapter 24

It would not be easy to believe that the corpses of the dead should sally (I know not by what agency) from their graves, and should wander about to the terror or destruction of the living, and again return to the tomb, which of its own accord spontaneously opened to receive them, did not frequent examples, occurring in our own times, suffice to establish this fact, to the truth of which there is abundant testimony. It would be strange if such things should have happened formerly, since we can find no evidence of them in the works of ancient authors, whose vast labour it was to commit to writing every occurrence worthy of memory; for if they never neglected to register even events of moderate interest, how could they have suppressed a fact at once so amazing and horrible, supposing it to have happened in their day? Moreover, were I to write down all the instances of this kind which I have ascertained to have befallen in our times, the undertaking would be beyond measure laborious and troublesome; so I will fain add two more only (and these of recent occurrence) to those I have already narrated, and insert them in our history, as occasion offers, as a warning to posterity.

A few years ago the chaplain of a certain illustrious lady, casting off mortality, was consigned to the tomb in that noble monastery which is called Melrose. This man, having little respect for the sacred order to which he belonged, was excessively secular in his pursuits, and - what especially blackens his reputation as a minister of the holy sacrament - so addicted to the vanity of the chase as to be designated by many by the infamous title of "Hundeprest" or the dog-priest; and this occupation, during his lifetime, was either laughed at by men, or considered in a worldly view; but after his death - as the event showed - the guiltiness of it was brought to light: for, issuing from the grave at night-time, he was prevented by the meritorious resistance of its holy inmates from injuring or terrifying any one with in the monastery itself; whereupon he wandered beyond the walls, and hovered chiefly, with loud groans and horrible murmurs, round the bedchamber of his former mistress. She, after this had frequently occurred, becoming exceedingly terrified, revealed her fears or danger to one of the friars who visited her about the business of the monastery; demanding with tears that prayers more earnest than usual should be poured out to the Lord in her

behalf as for one in agony. With whose anxiety the friar -- for she appeared deserving of the best endeavours, on the part of the holy convent of that place, by her frequent donations to it -- piously and justly sympathized, and promised a speedy remedy through the mercy of the Most High Provider for all.

Thereupon, returning to the monastery, he obtained the companionship of another friar, of equally determined spirit, and two powerful young men, with whom he intended with constant vigilance to keep guard over the cemetery where that miserable priest lay buried. These four, therefore, furnished with arms and animated with courage, passed the night in that place, safe in the assistance which each afforded to the other. Midnight had now passed by, and no monster appeared; upon which it came to pass that three of the party, leaving him only who had sought their company on the spot, departed into the nearest house, for the purpose, as they averred, of warming themselves, for the night was cold. As soon as this man was left alone in this place, the devil, imagining that he had found the right moment for breaking his courage, incontinently roused up his own chosen vessel, who appeared to have reposed longer than usual. Having beheld this from afar, he grew stiff with terror by reason of his being alone; but soon recovering his courage, and no place of refuge being at hand, he valiantly withstood the onset of the fiend, who came rushing upon him with a terrible noise, and he struck the axe which he wielded in his hand deep into his body. On receiving this wound, the monster groaned aloud, and turning his back, fled with a rapidity not at all interior to that with which he had advanced, while the admirable man urged his flying foe from behind, and compelled him to seek his own tomb again; which opening of its own accord, and receiving its guest from the advance of the pursuer, immediately appeared to close again with the same facility. In the meantime, they who, impatient of the coldness of the night, had retreated to the fire ran up, though somewhat too late, and, having heard what had happened, rendered needful assistance in digging up and removing from the midst of the tomb the accursed corpse at the earliest dawn. When they had divested it of the clay cast forth with it, they found the huge wound it had received, and a great quantity of gore which had flowed from it in the sepulchre; and so having carried it away beyond the walls of the monastery and burnt it, they scattered the ashes to the winds. These things I have

explained in a simple narration, as I myself heard them recounted by religious men.

Another event, also, not unlike this, but more pernicious in its effects, happened at the castle which is called Anantis, as I have heard from an aged monk who lived in honour and authority in those parts, and who related this event as having occurred in his own presence. A certain man of evil conduct flying, through fear of his enemies or the law, out of the province of York, to the lord of the before-named castle, took up his abode there, and having cast upon a service befitting his humour, laboured hard to increase rather than correct his own evil propensities. He married a wife, to his own ruin indeed, as it afterwards appeared; for, hearing certain rumours respecting her, he was vexed with the spirit of Jealousy. Anxious to ascertain the truth of these reports, he pretended to be going on a journey from which he would not return for some days; but coming back in the evening, he was privily introduced into his bedroom by a maidservant, who was in the secret, and lay hidden on a beam overhanging, his wife's chamber, that he might prove with his own eyes if anything were done to the dishonour of his marriage-bed. Thereupon beholding his wife in the act of fornication with a young man of the neighbourhood, and in his indignation forgetful of his purpose, he fell, and was dashed heavily to the ground, near where they were lying.

The adulterer himself leaped up and escaped; but the wife, cunningly dissembling the fact, busied herself in gently raising her fallen husband from the earth. As soon as he had partially recovered, he upbraided her with her adultery, and threatened punishment; but she answering, "Explain yourself, my lord," said she; "you are speaking unbecomingly which must be imputed not to you, but to the sickness with which you are troubled." Being much shaken by the fall, and his whole body stupefied, he was attacked with a disease, insomuch that the man whom I have mentioned as having related these facts to me visiting him in the pious discharge of his duties, admonished him to make confession of his sins, and receive the Christian Eucharist in proper form: but as he was occupied in thinking about what had happened to him, and what his wife had said, put off the wholesome advice until the morrow -- that morrow which in this world he was fated never to behold! -- for the next night, destitute of Christian grace, and a prey to his well-earned misfortunes, he shared the deep slumber of death. A Christian burial, indeed, he received, though unworthy of it; but it

did not much benefit him: for issuing, by the handiwork of Satan, from his grave at night-time, and pursued by a pack of dogs with horrible barkings, he wandered through the courts and around the houses while all men made fast their doors, and did not dare to go abroad on any errand whatever from the beginning of the night until the sunrise, for fear of meeting and being beaten black and blue by this vagrant monster. But those precautions were of no avail; for the atmosphere, poisoned by the vagaries of this foul carcass, filled every house with disease and death by its pestiferous breath.

Already did the town, which but a short time ago was populous, appear almost deserted; while those of its inhabitants who had escaped destruction migrated to other parts of the country, lest they too should die. The man from whose mouth I heard these things, sorrowing over this desolation of his parish, applied himself to summon a meeting of wise and religious men on that sacred day which is called Palm Sunday, in order that they might impart healthful counsel in so great a dilemma, and refresh the spirits of the miserable remnant of the people with consolation, however imperfect. Having delivered a discourse to the inhabitants, after the solemn ceremonies of the holy day had been properly performed, he invited his clerical guests, together with the other persons of honour who were present, to his table. While they were thus banqueting, two young men (brothers), who had lost their father by this plague, mutually encouraging one another, said, "This monster has already destroyed our father, and will speedily destroy us also, unless we take steps to prevent it. Let us, therefore, do some bold action which will at once ensure our own safety and revenge our father's death. There is no one to hinder us; for in the priest's house a feast is in progress, and the whole town is as silent as if deserted. Let us dig up this baneful pest, and burn it with fire."

Thereupon snatching up a spade of but indifferent sharpness of edge, and hastening to the cemetery, they began to dig; and whilst they were thinking that they would have to dig to a greater depth, they suddenly, before much of the earth had been removed, laid bare the corpse, swollen to an enormous corpulence, with its countenance beyond measure turgid and suffused with blood; while the napkin in which it had been wrapped appeared nearly torn to pieces. The young men, however, spurred on by wrath, feared not, and inflicted a wound upon the senseless carcass, out of which incontinently flowed such a stream of blood, that it might have been taken for a leech filled with the blood of many persons. Then, dragging it

beyond the village, they speedily constructed a funeral pile; and upon one of them saying that the pestilential body would not burn unless its heart were torn out, the other laid open its side by repeated blows of the blunted spade, and, thrusting in his hand, dragged out the accursed heart. This being torn piecemeal, and the body now consigned to the flames, it was announced to the guests what was going on, who, running thither, enabled themselves to testify henceforth to the circumstances. When that infernal hell-hound had thus been destroyed, the pestilence which was rife among the people ceased, as if the air, which had been corrupted by the contagious motions of the dreadful corpse, were already purified by the fire which had consumed it.

We now leave the medieval era and move forward in time as we continue our search for more English vampires…

The Doggett Vampire Case

Dorset is the home of the headless phantom of the Duke of Monmouth, so the ghost-hunters and folklorists say. The so-called Monmouth Ash Tree, standing between the villages of Woodlands and Horton, is said to mark the spot where the Duke was captured after his escape from the swamps of Sedgemoor in July 1685, and the grisly phantom of the long-dead Duke has been seen in the locality, minus his head. He met a gruesome end in the Tower of London for his rebellion, and it took several blows of the executioner's axe to chop the head off completely. The Monmouth Ash Tree, under which the Duke was apprehended, became a shrine to him after his death, with many of his friends and admirers visiting the tree over the years to carve their initials into its trunk. The family of the woman who betrayed the Duke was detested and cursed. She herself was said to have been afflicted with a horrific wasting disease, and members of her family died from mysterious illnesses within months of one another. The cottage the family had inhabited collapsed not long after these uncanny deaths, and a strange tall man in black was said to prowl the ruins after dark. The general consensus was that the figure was that of a vampire. A vagrant sleeping in the ruins of the cottage awakened one morning with blood pouring from a neck wound that refused to clot for hours. Days later, a young lady passing the cottage to rendezvous with her secret lover had her necks and breasts bitten by a tall dark stranger in a flowing cloak When she screamed for help he seemed to vanish into the night. Travellers passing the cottage ruins wore talismans and gypsy charms to protect themselves from the entity, which seemed to be most active on nights of the full moon. The face of the alleged vampire was chalk-white, his eyes were deep red, and his breath was said to be 'plague-ridden'. In all of the reports he is described as wearing a long cape, similar to an opera cloak. Seven miles north-east of the Monmouth Ash Tree lies the sleepy little village of Tarrant Gunville, situated at the head of the Tarrant Valley, close to the mysterious Neolithic earthwork known as the Dorset Cursus, which runs over six miles across the chalk downland of Cranborne Chase. To the east of Tarrant Gunville stands the surviving west pavilion of a stately Georgian home named Eastbury House, built by George Doddington, a Lord of the Admiralty, in the early 18th century. Doddington died in 1720 with

Eastbury House unfinished. He bequeathed the unfinished mansion, along with thirty-thousand pounds to a corpulent dandy of a nephew named George Bubb. In the last year of Bubb's life, he became the Baron Melcombe of Melcombe Regis when King George III granted him a peerage. The cost of running such a large residence as Eastbury House was prohibitive to the two people who inherited it after the death of Melcombe in 1762. Richard, Earl Temple was the first of these, and he in turn to George, second Earl Temple. He was prepared to offer anyone £200 per annum if they would live at Eastbury House and look after the place, but had no takers. In the end, as Earl Temple was living at his retreat in Italy (for health reasons), his loyal steward, William Doggett, was given the responsibility of dealing with the white elephant property, and acting in what he imagined to be his master's best interests, he decided to demolish the south wing of Eastbury House and sold the rare building materials to make money for himself. Lord Temple returned from Italy and Doggett, full of guilt and shame, decided to shoot himself through the head. He died instantly and the stain left from the pool of blood around his head soaked through the carpet and floorboards and proved impossible to remove. Surprisingly, Doggett's body was buried in the consecrated ground of Tarrant Gunville Churchyard; in those days, the Church arranged for all suicide victims to be buried in unconsecrated ground, often at crossroads with a stake hammered through their mid-sections to prevent them from rising and walking. However, it seems William Doggett still 'walked' after his death, despite being interred in the sanctified soil of a churchyard. Three days after his funeral, William Doggett walked the earth again as a vampiric predator, wearing a long dark violet coat, his wig, and knee breeches tied with his distinctive yellow silk ribbon. Those unlucky enough to encounter him from close quarters saw that his eyes were lifeless and sunken, and his mouth was a frowning crescent from which long pointed teeth protruded. He prowled near the gates of Eastbury House for several nights, and was later seen peering into the windows of his former home. Poachers in the area were allegedly attacked by him one moonless night, and one of them was seriously wounded by a deep bite-wound to his forearm. The poacher is said to have died days later under a hedgerow, foaming at the mouth as he went into convulsions. That poacher was burned by his friends in a clearing of a local wood to prevent him returning to life as one of the 'undead'. Months later, a young man from the nearby village of Witchampton was

fooling around whilst thatching a cottage one day and tragically fell and broke his neck. A wake was held and he was placed in a polished elm coffin and put on display in the front room of his home. During the night, noises were heard in that front room and the father of the household investigated and found a ghastly-looking man sucking the neck of his dead son – who was now sitting upright in the coffin with blank white eyes. The father was confused and horrified, and he went to fetch a sword he kept upstairs at his bedside. When he returned, the bloodsucking ghoul had gone, and his son was lying in his coffin as normal again, only there were two deep puncture marks on the throat. The son was duly buried days later, but his solid-looking ghost was seen on many occasions, and it often stalked two girls who had known the dead son when he was alive. A Catholic priest is said to have visited the local churchyard in the end, to exhume the son's body and exorcise the evil spirit that had turned it into a vampire. When the son's corpse was examined, fresh blood was found on the lips, and the face had a rosy complexion. Sliding the eyelids back, the priest saw that the eyes were red and flecked with gold. An exorcism was performed immediately, and before the coffin lid was replaced, a rosary was strung around the neck of the corpse. After that, the son's apparition was seen no more, but the vampire Doggett remained at large for many years, until he too was exhumed in the year 1845. The body bore not a trace of decomposition, but looked fresh and in the best of health. Some say Doggett's eyes opened with a look of terror before a vampire-hunter hammered a hawthorn stake through his heart, finally ending his reign of terror.

Decades before Doggett was born, another vampire is said to have stalked the Dorset countryside, but information on this bloodsucker is very scarce. Sometime in the 17th century, two drunken robbers of Evershot decided to attack an old man who was thought to be carrying a bag of gold coins. The robbers ambushed the elderly man as he returned from an inn, searched him, found the gold, and then sadistically beat him up before inflicting a terrible blow to his head with a large stone. The oldster was found at the roadside shortly afterwards, groaning unconsciously as his brains spilled from his skull like the yoke from a cracked egg. The old man died soon after, and his killers were subsequently brought to justice after a landlord heard them joking about their sadistic act in his inn. The murderers were fastened alive in iron cages similar to the gibbets hanged men were displayed in. The men were left in the cages that were chained either side of

an oak tree on branches, and there they were left to die of thirst, starvation and exposure to the inclement weather. The doomed duo begged food and drink from passers by, but even the most sympathetic person who heard their cries dared not help them or he or she would be punished by the law. One of the men bit into his own hand and arm to consume his own flesh and wet his dried throat with his own blood, and within days the miscreants became so weak and despondent, they gave up all hope and waited for death. A heavy shower roused the hungry men and quenched their first for a short while, but when night fell, they shivered in their soaked clothes. One night, as the lives of the dangling men ebbed away in their cages, something terrifying and unearthly took place. A shadowy figure of a man approached in the moonlight and stopped beneath the cages. He wore a flowing cape and his face was ashen. He glanced up at the caged murderers, then flew up to one of their cages like a bird. He reached between the bars of the cage and pulled out the arm of one of the men, then bit his wrist. A night watchman witnessed this and ran to the village to raise the alarm, for he knew the flying caped man was a vampire who had been on the prowl for many years in the area. When the watchman and several men returned, they saw that one of the murderers had somehow escaped from his cage. The bars had been wrenched apart. The other caged killer died that night as he was quizzed over his friend's incredible escape. That same night, the landlord of the inn who had been responsible for the killer's detection and arrest was attacked in his bed by an intruder who tore the flesh from his face with his clawed hands. The landlord was also bitten on the neck and arms as he tried to defend himself. He fought back at the assailant, swinging a poker he kept under his bed, and was astonished to see the intruder flee to the open bedroom window and dive suicidally into the street. The eerie attacker suffered no harm when he landed on the cobbled road, but ran off at a phenomenal speed into the darkness. The landlord became very ill, and began to suffer from strange hallucinations. He began to suffer from incessant palpitations of the heart which made sleeping impossible, and so he decided to end his life by plunging a knife through his heart.

The two vampires remained at large in that area of Dorset, and some think they are still around today with many others of their kind who have been turned into vampires over the centuries.

Vampires of the North

As astonishing as it sounds, Liverpool has quite a history of vampires. At the junction of the city's Rupert Lane, Breck Road, Heyworth Street and Everton Road, there lies the skeleton of a man who bit his wife, drank her blood, and, until he had a wooden stake driven through him and was re-interred face down, allegedly rose regularly from his crossroads grave after dark to terrorise the women of old Everton. That was in 1680, and being a Lancashire man born and bred, I have in my files, dozens of such reported incidents, right up to the present day. In the summer of 1866, a gory, shocking murder took place in Liverpool at 14 Wood Grove, which now exists only as a weed-carpeted cul-de-sac off Edge Lane, beside a derelict garage. Here, in May 1866, one John Thomas Moss, an outspoken 27-year-old hater of the Christian religion, stayed with his beautiful 25-year-old cousin, Mrs "Nan" Train, a woman who felt abandoned by her husband Thomas Train, a ship's purser. Moss was rumoured to be a vampire, and people had said they had seen his eyes 'light up' like burning coals at the mere mention of Jesus Christ. Women found themselves attracted to him and some even offered to walk out of stable marriages just to wait on him. For many years he lived in Sydney as a cigar manufacturer, when something happened to him, for the John Moss who returned to Liverpool in the early 1860s was not the same happy young man who had gone to seek a fortune and a new life in Australia. There were very strange stories about a suicide attempt at the Albert Dock, and how his lifeless body, dredged from the salty mud at night by watchmen, was apparently revived by moonlight – one of the uncanny biological capabilities of a vampire. Mrs Train had had Moss as a lodger for a few years before he was to horrifically murder her. In the Spring of 1866 she and her cousin moved from Elm Vale in Bootle to Wood Grove, in Liverpool's Old Swan district, and even Mrs Train's husband did not seem to mind Moss's constant presence. It appears that when the cousins were children, they vowed never to separate and, pricking palms and mixing their blood, they ritually sealed their promise. The only witness to the ghastly murder was 20-year-old Margaret Golding, the maidservant of Mrs Train. She bravely stayed with her mistress as Moss followed his cousin around the Old Swan residence with a hatchet. Mr Train, as usual, was away at sea, and Mrs Train was slaughtered because

she would not give a ring to Moss, and, more importantly, she would not desert her husband and marry him. He ranted on about Hell and the Almighty, rejecting both, and the maid Golding trembled as his eyes began to glow ‘as if on fire’. Moss brought the hatchet down on his cousin’s head repeatedly, taking off her nose as the blade embedded itself deeply in her head. During one of the hatchet blows, Mrs Train’s eyeball flew out its socket. The maid was so terrified she was unable to scream, and she found herself running down the stairs, almost in slow motion, as nerves got the better of her legs. Behind her, she heard what she would later describe as the sound like that of a butcher’s hatchet hitting bones. When the neighbours and police stormed the house, they found Moss in an immense pool of blood on the kitchen floor. He had cut his own throat, and according to the coroner, Moss had known exactly which arteries to cut in his neck to affect an instantaneous death.

The rumours of vampirism, the stigma of suicide (deemed unholy in those times), and the brutal murder, led to Moss’s body being buried in unconsecrated ground between St Anne’s Church, Stanley, and the cattle market. The body of John Thomas Moss was staked, they say, with wood cut from the oldest tree – the Allerton Oak, in Calderstones, which still stands today, aged over a thousand years old, but, as you may have guessed, that was not the end of Moss. His caped form was seen over many evenings in June 1866, lurking in St Mary’s Cemetery, Kirkdale, the resting place of his beloved murder victim Mrs Train. A teenaged courting couple, kissing beneath a willow tree in the cemetery, were attacked by the cloaked fiend, but they both ran off and raised the alarm at a nearby inn. A small posse turned out to hunt the ghoul, who was seen jumping straight over a five-foot wall at the cemetery, his cloak billowing behind him. He also stalked the young maid Margaret Golding in December of that year. The maid had been having terrible vivid blood-spattered nightmares in which she relived the horrors of seeing her mistress being hacked to death, and one night she awoke in her bedroom at a friend’s house in Liverpool’s Aigburth district, when she felt a strange urge to go to her window. Through a glacial fog, she saw a pale-faced man in a black, wearing an opera cloak, but no hat on such an inclement night, standing on the pavement, gazing up at her window. Margaret’s heart almost stopped when she realised it was John Thomas Moss, because his eyes started to glow with a reddish orange tint. As the girl turned and ran out of her room, she heard the window rattling violently

behind her, as if someone was trying to open it from outside, but she was too afraid to look around, and she awakened the entire household with her screams. Understandably, Margaret's friend believed the poor girl had suffered nothing more than a lucid nightmare, caused no doubt by the traumatic memories of the horrific murder of her employer, but over the next three fog-bound nights, the evil-looking shade of John Thomas Moss was seen by other members of the household, looking through a basement window of the house, and, according to a neighbour, the cloaked stalker had even been seen on the roof of the Georgian dwelling, apparently trying to break open the skylight window. In the end, a local Catholic priest blessed the house, sprinkled Holy water over the threshold, and gave Margaret a Bible and a Rosary to keep on her bedside table. That seemed to do the trick, and Moss gave up his sinister pursuit of the former maid.

The Reverend Thomas Gardner, incumbent of St Anne's Church, Stanley, which overlooked the site where Moss had been buried, staked and face down in an unmarked grave on wasteland, warned his congregation in a chilling sermon, about the dangers of succumbing to the dark powers of evil as Moss had. He talked of lost souls wandering the darkness after death, of demonic persecution and possession, and a nerve-jangling topic that was doing the round in his parish – vampirism. People living within a mile of the site where Moss lay in his unchristian grave slept with crosses and hung garlic from their bedposts, and for many months, the churches of the district became packed as parishioners sought divine protection from the self-resurrected Moss. Eventually the vampire mania subsided, but even today, there are occasional sightings of a solid, carnate ghost in a cloak who has been seen in the area of Liverpool's Edge Lane, close to the street where Moss butchered his cousin and took his own life.

The Mysterious 'Vampire Grave'

One of the greatest and enduring mysteries in Liverpool's history started to unfold in the autumn of 1973, when a gang of workmen set about clearing land to build a two-storey Roman Catholic primary school between St Oswald's Street and Montague Road, in the district of Old Swan. The £450,000 St Oswald's Primary School would be built on scrubland near to the church, and Father Patrick James McCartney did warn the workmen that they were likely to come across a few graves during their excavations, but no one at that point knew about the sinister, macabre secret which would soon be brought to light. An unmarked coffin was unearthed, then another one, but the foreman, Thomas Breen, told his men to carry on, and the coffins were solemnly put aside with the utmost respect. However, the workmen soon discovered that in an area 40 yards square, there were coffins piled sixteen high. Building work was immediately suspended, and the Clerk of Works had a look at the unusual find. It was a mass grave, and the total number of coffins discovered totalled 3,561. The mystery then deepened, because there were no records of any mass burial in the registers of St Oswald's Church. This seemed to indicate that the 3,561 bodies had been stacked in the ground prior to 1840 – the year when registration of burials became compulsory.

Local and national historians were naturally intrigued by the Old Swan mass grave, and some theorised that the dead were plague and cholera victims, but people who had died of such diseases were usually put in quicklime without coffins. Furthermore, the dates of the plagues and cholera outbreaks in Liverpool and the numbers of the victims, as well as the time window within which they were buried, simply did not tally with the facts regarding the mass burial at Old Swan. Some historians even thought the answer to the baffling mass burial had something to do with the Benedictine Fathers who built a church near to the huge grave in the 18th century.

Before the historians could examine the mysterious coffins, the Home Office ordered Liverpool City Council to cordon off the mass grave with a 10-foot-high security fence. Officials in Whitehall subsequently gave instructions to cremate the unknown dead and to deposit the remains at Anfield Cemetery. The workmen then had to wait 18 months before the

building of the school could commence, and in the meantime, the media was warned off when reporters tried to discover what had been found off St Oswald's Street. The news leaked out that investigators had deduced that the 3,561 bodies had all been buried at the same time, which meant it certainly hadn't been a plague pit or a pauper's grave. Furthermore, there were inexplicable holes in most of the breastplates of the dead, almost as if they had been - staked. What then, is the truth behind the mystery of the Old Swan mass grave?

In 1995, several Lancashire historians contacted Whitehall, hoping to discover why the Home Office had given orders to cremate the unknown dead of Old Swan, and a spokesman said he couldn't trace any records of the incident. The files relating to the mysterious mass grave had apparently been destroyed. The puzzle then, of how 3,561 bodies came to be buried off St Oswald's Street, remains unsolved. Victims of plague and cholera were dumped in pits often filled with quicklime, but the thousands of bodies found at Old Swan were not only placed in coffins, they had been buried in groups according to their age, which suggests all of the internments took place simultaneously. This means there are two possibilities, both of them controversial. Were over 3000 people massacred at Old Swan at some time in the 1840s or perhaps a decade before? If we suppose there had been some uprising, and that the authorities had dealt with the revolt by massacring the dissenters, would they have afterwards buried the victims in coffins? Thousands of poor people were disembowelled and hanged by the authorities in England during the Peasant's Revolt of 1382, but news of the massacre could not be contained, and soon spread across the country. Although Old Swan was a peaceful rural suburb when the bodies were buried there en masse, news of any rebellion and subsequent carnage would surely have been impossible to contain.

The way the coffins were neatly laid out at Old Swan smacks of military involvement. All of the bodies with teeth – meaning they were young when they died – were placed in one particular section, and the coffins were perfectly aligned. The coffins at Old Swan had been buried simultaneously, in perfect alignment, and this would have required some manpower and organisation to achieve. To an army of trained military men with spades, the task would have been completed within days. The foreman who oversaw the removal of the bodies in the mass grave vividly recalls that there were no infants among the dead, which does pose a problem to the theory about

the bodies of Old Swan being transplanted from an existing churchyard. Surely there would be infants among the dead? The foreman also remarked that the coffin wood was almost impossible to burn and a lot of it was buried on the site of the school. Perhaps if some of this wood could be recovered today, there may be some traces of DNA material to be had, however slight. John McDonald, one of the workers who excavated the graves told me how, at one point during the gruesome excavation, a perfectly preserved young woman with reddish hair, dressed in a white garment, slid out of a damaged coffin and landed in the rain-soaked mud with a sickening thud. Within minutes her pretty face and youthful body started to disintegrate as the atmosphere set in. When the rain worsened at one point, a young gravedigger found himself sinking into a quagmire with the bodies sliding out of their decaying coffins. The excavation pit became waterlogged and the whole scene was reminiscent of a scene from the film Poltergeist, with buoyant coffins opening and rotting corpses floating in the water.

The Home Office has suspiciously ‘lost’ the files referring to the Old Swan mass graves burial site, so it may be some time before we learn the truth about this enduring mystery.

Manilu - the Lodge Lane Vampire

I remember taking calls at BBC Radio Merseyside after a programme I'd broadcast on vampires, and I talked to about a dozen callers who claimed they had been bitten in the neck during the night, and had woken up with bloodstained pillows and bedclothes. A majority of these people lived close to one another off Liverpool's Earle Road, and I visited a few of these 'victims' and found them all apparently sane enough. These night-bites continued for about six months and then ceased as mysteriously as they had started. Around that time, there was a strange rumour about a vampire named "Manilu" being on the prowl in the area around Lodge Lane. People claimed to have actually seen him, and described him as a bald-headed man with a pale, foreign-looking face, dressed in black. A 67-year-old woman told me how she had been walking along Hartington Road with her Jack Russell dog Simon one summer evening at 10pm when a weird-looking man picked up the dog with both hands and sunk his teeth into it. The dog yelped and almost died from blood loss. That same week in 1997, the same man, who matched the aforementioned description of Manilu, was seen prowling nearby Toxteth Park Cemetery on Smithdown Road. A heroin-user who often injected in the cemetery during twilight, saw a tall bald "ghoul" creeping among the gravestones, muttering to himself in a foreign language. A gang of children were roaming the cemetery several nights later when the tall peculiar stranger chased them, and allegedly grabbed one young lad by his ankle and threw him perilously high into the air as if he was a doll. On another occasion the heroin addict was spotted by the graveyard prowler, but he did nothing, as if he realised the drug user was not a threat, and simply walked off into the darkness. The reports of Manilu date back at least to the 1940s, and may simply be urban legends, but I feel there is much more to him than that.

In 1894, a 60-year-old woman named Emma Furnival, who ran a bakery at 13 Lodge Lane, was visited by a sinister abnormally tall man in black with "foreign features" and peculiar dark eyes. The man entered her shop to buy a loaf, and he spoke in broken English with an East European inflection in his voice. At this time, there were queer rumours about a vampire being at large in the south of Liverpool after a child and a number of women living near Sefton Park had awakened in the morning to find strange

puncture wounds on their necks. Bram Stoker had not yet written *Dracula*, his Gothic masterpiece, but the habits of vampires were well-known, and one of them was the drawing of blood from the neck. The vampire was also believed to originate from Eastern Europe, from places such as Transylvania and Hungary, and when the tall thin foreign man with staring eyes remarked upon the beauty of Mrs Furnival's neck, she became so frightened she ran through a door to a back room on the premises and locked herself in. The man in the black homburg and frock-coat made himself scarce, but was later seen prowling nearby Toxteth Park Cemetery at twilight. Two policemen chased him but he somehow managed to evade them among the forest of gravestones. Weeks later, two spinster sisters, surnamed Bould, awoke at their home on Earle Road to find the tall silhouette of a man standing in their bedroom. One of the sisters screamed and fled from the room, but the other one remained in her bed, frozen with fear. The intruder assaulted her, bit her neck, and drew off blood, before fleeing through a window. The assailant was never captured, and his bloodsucking fuelled the vampire 'mania' prevalent in south Liverpool at that time. The reports of the vampiric man then subsided for decades, but in the late 1940s, dark rumours about a vampire who prowled the area bounded by Lodge Lane, Smithdown Road and Ullet Road began to circulate in postwar Liverpool. According to the rumours, the vampire was well over 6 feet in height, and was named Manilu. Some said his first name was Nathan. He was said to have lived at a crumbling Victorian house off Lodge Lane for over forty years, and at this old abode he had accumulated a handful of disciples who had been initiated into his personal religion by participating in blood-drinking rites. Of course, the vampire stories may be nothing more than hearsay, urban myths and exaggeration, yet I believe there is more than a grain of truth in the stories of Manilu. In the 1980s, a wave of vampire reports rippled across several parts of Liverpool, originating in Lodge Lane. A highly-controversial self-styled vampire-hunter, Victor Mordelly, set out to confront the vampire and lay it to rest. Equipped with hawthorn stakes, holy water, crucifixes – and a profound knowledge of these creatures of the night – Mordelly allegedly traced "Manilu" to his lair. I will now relate the shocking outcome of this vampire hunt, according to Mordelly's testimony.

In February 1983, a young single mum living in a bedsit off Lodge Lane with her eight-month-old baby had the feeling that she was being watched.

She was not the superstitious or paranoid type, but from the day she moved into the bedsit, she had the horrible sensation of being observed by someone or something next door, especially at night. In the end, the edgy electric atmosphere in the bedsit became so intense that the woman went to Wavertree Road police station and told a bemused constable about the interminable feeling about being watched by something evil in the flat next door. The policeman said there was nothing he could do, but the girl began to sob, and she hysterically begged him to send an officer to the flat adjacent to her bedsit, for she felt as if something sinister was going on next door - but it was hard for her to put her fears into words. To calm her down the police officer promised he'd send someone around to look into the matter, and that night as the young woman was watching News at Ten to take her mind off the eerie predicament, she was startled to hear loud thumps coming from the flat next door. She looked out the window and saw a police car down below in the street. Then she realised that the police constables had responded to her plea, and were inspecting the next-door flat; they had been the source of the banging noises. The police later revealed to her what they had found in the flat next door, and the revelation resulted in the girl packing her bags. After they had broken into the flat, the two policemen saw that the previous occupier had painted all of the walls black. These walls were dotted with mysterious pentagrams and other occult symbols. In the middle of the floor there was a coffin which looked over a hundred years old. It had probably been stolen from a tomb in a local graveyard, but it was empty and there were no traces of the corpse it had contained. The nameplate was too rusted to be identifiable. Next to the coffin was a mysterious ancient mildewed handwritten book on occultism, and next to this tome was an empty milk bottle - which contained a small amount of human clotted blood.

No one in the street could remember who the occupier of that flat was, and he or she never returned, but even the hard-boiled streetwise policemen said they experienced an icy chill in that flat. Understandably, the young mum left the bedsit that very night and went to stay with her auntie on the Wirral. The 50-year-old self-styled ‘vampire-hunter’ Victor Mordelly committed the crime of trespass to investigate this peculiar incident. He examined the flat with the black walls and ceiling. He looked into a wardrobe in the room of the flat and discovered a hole in its floor. This hole led down into the cellar, and from the cellar, a tunnel ran into the darkness.

Mordelly explored this tunnel, armed with his vampire-hunting kit – which contained a mallet, hawthorn stakes, holy water, cloves of garlic, and a crucifix.

He bravely negotiated the winding tunnel for a mile or two, until he came upon a large vault coated with fungus, lichens, stalagmites and stalactites. Set into the limestone-encrusted floor of this vault was a block of sandstone, upon which someone had placed two rusted candlesticks streaked with black wax. Mordelly had seen such subterranean 'altars' before in tunnels leading from Beeston Castle in Cheshire, and also in the caverns beneath places as far apart as Billinge and Kirkby Lonsdale. Mordelly could see tell-tale dark stains of mammal blood on the altar, but no sign of the Sanguinarians (Mordelly's term for vampires) responsible for the sacrifices. The courageous stalker of vampires raked the darkness ahead with the beam of his torch as he trudged through a tunnel that became increasingly more waterlogged with each step. After almost an hour he came upon a glimmer of light in the roof of the tunnel. Pale wintry daylight bled in through a crescent opening in the roof, and Mordelly could see the grim grey tenements known as Fontenoy Gardens through the aperture. He consulted his A to Z map book and deduced that the secret passage had led him into a disused railway tunnel. The only exit from this tunnel was blocked by a landslide of discarded rubbish, so Mordelly was forced to go back the way he had come. When he passed the altar, he heard a sound reverberate through the tunnel, and at first it sounded like the dripping of water that had percolated through the sandstone stratum. Clouds of his exhaled breath bloomed in mid-air in the glare of the torch as he became anxious – then he saw Manilu. Mordelly claims in his unpublished books on vampirology that some of these underground bloodsuckers living in perpetual darkness were devoid of eyes, but the vampire standing inert before him had large expressive red watery eyes. Mordelly slowly reached into a satchel to retrieve a revolver loaded with hollow-point bullets tainted with hawthorn berry powder. With an extraordinary swiftness the vampire flew at him, knocking Mordelly on his back with a bony fist. The thing held him down by the throat and bared its long fangs.

Mordelly lay on his back with the strong iron-grip hands of the bloodsucking fiend Manilu around his neck. The vampire knelt with his legs on either side of Mordelly as he opened his mouth, ready to pierce the carotid artery. Mordelly felt the ground in desperation, seconds from a

choking death, hoping to find the revolver loaded with hawthorn-tipped bullets, but it wasn't there. Instead, Mordelly's hand located a sharpened hawthorn stake, and in one swift movement he pushed its pointed end into the vampire's gaping mouth until it was impaled in the palate. The creature screamed as blood dripped and sprayed from its mouth and it released its deathly grip then rose up trying desperately trying to pull out the stake. Mordelly pushed the soles of his boots into Manilu's chest and sent him flying backwards into the darkness. Mordelly saw the revolver by the light of the torch lying in a puddle, and he seized it and began to fire at the tall wiry bloodsucker. After the third shot the unearthly figure flitted into the shadows with the agility of a startled spider. Mordelly turned and ran back down the tunnel until he reached the cellar of the house off Lodge Lane. He rented a flat on Picton Road in Wavertree, and wrote an account of his encounter with vampires in Liverpool and elsewhere. He went to a local paranormal investigation group and asked them to assist him in his vampire hunt, but they mocked him and decided he was crazy. Mordelly claimed that the network of tunnels excavated by the "Edge Hill Mole" Joseph Williamson under Liverpool in the early 1800s were now being used by light-fearing vampires, and even controversially suggested that Williamson himself may have been a dhampir (having a vampire father and human mother). John Burns, a member of the ghost-hunting group, initially believed Mordelly was a crank until late one night in 1983 when he pulled into a filling station in Wavertree. Burns saw Mordelly running from a lane, pursued by two strange-looking men in black - each about 6ft 5 in height. Burns watched as one of these tall skinny men picked up Mordelly and threw him onto a rubbish skip as if he was a rag doll. Burns went to Mordelly's aid and saw from closer quarters that the eccentric man's attackers were pale-faced with joined-up eyebrows and long pointed fangs. One of the sinister figures lunged towards Burns, but was struck by a car. Despite appalling injuries, the figure got to its feet and gave chase with its weird-looking comrade. Mordelly ran with Burns to his car and managed to escape. According to Mordelly, the two figures were centuries-old vampire confederates of Manilu. Burns decided that Mordelly was not a crank at all, and decided to join him in his quest to fight the Sanguinarians. I could fill a book with the tales of Mordelly and Burns, and who knows? Perhaps I will one day, although I doubt many would believe my accounts of their nocturnal adventures. Believe it or not, vampires are still being reported

today. In January 2005, vampire mania swept Birmingham after the newspapers reported a Dracula-like attacker on the loose. The "Birmingham vampire" was even reported in the high-brow pages of *The Guardian*. The vampire reports are also available to see online. According to Mordelly, Manilu is still at large across the north-west after dark. I remember an incident many years ago, in the 1990s, in which a Tuebrook man was going to a filling station at three in the morning to buy cigarettes, and whilst on his way, a black limousine pulled up, and two tall men in black suits seized him by each elbow and pushed him into the back of the vehicle. The man resisted but felt an electrical jolt through his chest; perhaps from a stunner. He became groggy and the limo was driven to somewhere in the Toxteth area, because the captive remembered passing Lodge Lane Library. The abducted man was taken into a house and down into a spacious cellar, where a man sat on what could only be described as a throne. It was a high-backed seat of marble, featuring strange gargoyles and carvings of serpents. The man seated on it was bald, and although he was sitting down it was clear, from the unusually elongated proportions of his torso and limbs, that he was very tall. His face was so pale it looked as if he was wearing make up, and his eyes protruded from their dark-lined sockets. On one of his fingers he wore a large ruby ring, and his suit looked as if it was made of black velvet. His shirt was dark blue and satin. For a few tense moments he surveyed the captured man trembling between the two heavies before him, then announced, 'That is not Cavaleri [or what sounded like that name].'

The man on the throne waved the frightened Tuebrook man away and the two tall muscular henchmen dragged the abductee up a flight of stone steps and back to the limousine. The man was dropped off on Binns Road without a word of explanation or apology. The gargoyles on the throne and the serpents indicate an occult element. Was the man seated on that throne the legendary Manilu?

The Tarbock Fiend

The Brick Wall Inn is a pub that stands on Netherley Road, Tarbock, on the outskirts of Liverpool. It was built in 1940 on the site of the original Brick Wall Inn, which was built in the late 17th century, and although the inn today has its own innocuous ghosts (as most pubs do) the area in which it is set was once the backdrop if a terrifying supernatural mystery. The creature was known as the 'Tarbock Fiend', the 'Cronton Vampire' and many other names, but to this day no one knows just exactly what instilled so much fear into the hearts of people who lived in the countryside surrounding the Brick Wall Inn. Around 1838, a group of farmers formed the Farmers Rest Lodge, a friendly society that acted as both a co-operative group and a charity for worthy causes. The lodge met at the Brick Wall Inn, and one blazing July day in 1839, as the farmers converged on the meeting place, two of them came across a girl of about fourteen, crying as she staggered along a cinder track that is now Greensbridge Lane. The girl was clutching her blood-soaked neck, and further down the road her frightened horse was seized. The animal also bore the marks of what seemed like a knife-attack. The girl gave a garbled description of her attacker. He was much taller than her, muscular, and had a mass of black hair and a beard. His nose was large and wide, and his mouth had a row of 'rotten fangs'. His bulging eyes were full of madness and he looked more like an animal than a man. He wore a long flowing black cape and a pair of gauntlets, and his gloved hands had tried to throttle the girl as he attacked her after jumping out from behind trees as she rode along. The brute dragged the girl off the horse and bit her neck. He ran off when the girl screamed and vanished into nearby woods. The girl was taken to the Brick Wall Inn and bandaged by a doctor. The 'fiend' was seen mostly at night after that, and despite the attempts of a posse of armed farmers to track the beastly assailant down, he was never caught. There were reported sightings and attacks of the Tarbock Fiend across several manors, and he was seen in places ranging from the land where Netherley now stands, right up to Cronton, where he was regarded as a vampire who had been active over seventy years before in that area. The fiend seemed to go into hibernation for many years but returned with a vengeance in the 1840s. Around this time, the cloaked figure of the Victorian bogeyman Spring-Heeled Jack was seen in various parts of

England, and some confused sightings of the caped fiend with Jack and vice versa. Eventually the fiend of Tarbock vanished into obscurity, but then in 1898 – 59 years after his first attack – a rumour spread throughout an area bounded by Halewood, Tarbock and Knowsley which stated that the fiend had returned. One stormy night in 1898, a local vagrant barged into the Brick Wall Inn, out of breath and in a state of terror. He told the pub landlord Jim Ambrose that the Devil had chased him across fields. The tale the tramp told was so frightening, the superstitious landlord locked the inn door and loaded a shotgun. Moments later, something pounded heavily at this door, and a grotesque face was seen gazing through a window. People refused to go home from the pub until almost four in the morning when the light of dawn crept over the manor. Was it all the work of a prankster? Was it all in the mind? If it was a real vampire, could the Tarbock Fiend still be around today?

The Case of theGreek Vampire

In the late 1860s, Nathaniel Cain, a wealthy Lancashire merchant who dealt in iron ore, bought a mansion at 40 Upper Parliament Street, Liverpool, and hired a cortege of servants to wait upon him. Cain was a lover of wine, and decided to extend his cellar to stock the various bottles of expensive claret and chardonnay. Workmen were brought in to remodel the existing cellar, and during their excavations, they came upon what seemed to be a tomb of polished granite. Upon a wall of this tomb was a Christian cross, and a plaque inscribed with obscure glyphs which resembled Greek letters. Georgio Eustratiadi, an Italian merchant, and close friend of Nathaniel Cain, was invited into the cellar to look at the 'tomb' and he advised his associate not to enter the cubic vault, which measured about nine feet in height. The Italian made the sign of the cross and told his bemused friend that he felt as if something evil lay within that burial vault. Mr Cain told the Italian he was being superstitious, and that he'd report the vault to the authorities, so that if it did contain mortal remains, they could be re-interred in a churchyard. The authorities were not informed, however, and privately-hired workmen excavated around the strange vault. One of the men said it would be better to leave the stone structure intact, as it would support the roof of the extended wine cellar. Cain however, had a burning, morbid curiosity to know just who lay within that vault, and he wondered what course of action to take. It would desecration to look into the tomb, but his intense inquisitiveness overrode any moral considerations.

Weeks after the discovery of the enigmatic tomb, the servants at Cain's house claimed to hear strange sounds coming from the wine cellar, and three days after the workmen had remodelled the cellar, Nathaniel Cain himself heard the eerie sound of a man singing all hours in the morning. On one occasion, as a fierce wind from the Mersey howled along Upper Parliament Street, Master Cain arose from his bed at four in the morning, with a pistol in one hand and a lit candle in the other. He descended the stairs, and heard not only the sounds of someone singing in a foreign language, but the eerie sounds of the singer's manic, shrieking laughter. With a shudder, Cain realised that the origin of the uncanny nocturnal racket was the cellar, and he decided to turn around and leave the hallway to go back to his bedroom.

A solicitor from nearby Montpellier Terrace named Thomas Paget had studied ancient Greek at university, and Mr Cain invited him into the wine cellar to hopefully decode the baffling inscription on the vault. After Paget had read the inscription by the light of a lantern, he unashamedly hurried from the cellar, followed closely by the iron merchant Cain, who was naturally curious as to what had unnerved his colleague. The inscription had been barely legible to read in some parts, but Paget got the gist of the writing, which warned that the soul of the person within the vault was too wicked to be allowed within the realm of the dead, and an unknown word - "vurculac" - was referred to twice in the engraved message. Paget consulted his father's library and discovered to his horror that "vurculac" - according to ancient East European folklore - was a type of vampire.

Nathaniel Cain and Thomas Paget researched the history of 40 Upper Parliament Street, and saw that no church ever stood there, so the vault could not belong to some forgotten graveyard of yore. According to Georgio Eustratiadi, his friend Nathaniel Cain paid a sect of monks a huge sum of money to dismantle the vault, and they told him that all it contained was a burial shroud, which soon disintegrated upon contact with the air. The monks blessed the wine cellar, and told Cain that a vampiric being that had lain in the tomb had probably gone to ground in a nearby cemetery.

Strangely enough, a month later, an elderly servant at Cain's mansion told her master that she had answered the door one evening to see a man dressed in a black cape on the doorstep, who said nothing, but stared at her with dark menacing eyes, 'smiling like the Devil himself' said the young servant. The odd visitor uttered something unintelligible and lurched forward, but the maid slammed the door on the weird caller. Cain dismissed the servant's claim as the product of 'her Irish imagination,' but the master of the household later heard of other reports of the eerie man in black from the most unlikeliest source. In January 1870, the Greek Orthodox Church of St Nicholas was consecrated on Liverpool's Berkley Street - just around the corner from Cain's mansion. A religious friend of Cain named John Stanley had actually met the Most Reverend, Alexander Lycurgus, the Archbishop of Syra and Tenos, who had consecrated the newly-built Greek Church. After the consecration ceremony, an Anglican minister and a Greek Priest talked about a strange-looking man who had been prevented from stealing the chalice containing the Holy Eucharist from the Greek Church. Moreover, this man wore a black, wide-brimmed hat, a cape, and had a

sinister, pallid face with a pair of intensely staring eyes. He dashed off from the church, leaving his would-be captor clutching the cape, and ran with amazing speed off into the evening gloom, in the direction of Catharine Street. The Archbishop Lycurgus and the Greek priest were of the opinion that the individual who had attempted to steal the Eucharist was a "Vyrolakos" - a type of vampire found in countries off the Adriatic and Agean coasts. Some of the Anglican ministers tried to defuse the spine-chilling talk of vampires by talking about mundane matters, but Mr Stanley asked the Greek priest what the so-called vampire would want with the Eucharist. 'Perhaps to desecrate the most powerful and important part of the mass in a ritual of black magic,' the Greek minister answered. Mr Stanley was horrified yet intrigued by the idea of a vampire, which, he had assumed, was merely a figment of folklore.

The Greek holy man assured the staid Lancashire man that vampires were a reality; that a vampire was the shell of a foul person who had led a life of gross immorality and unbridled wickedness; someone who had rejected God, spat upon the Bible, and delighted in child-murder and the practise of cannibalism. Upon death, that type of person was sometimes rejected from entering into the world of clean spirit, and became reanimated by demonic entities to wreak havoc. The Greek told Stanley dark tales of the Vyrolakos which chilled him to the bone, and warned him to be careful when passing graveyards - the lair of the Vyrolakos - at night.

When Cain told Stanley about the strange tomb that had been found beneath his house, and the inscriptions referring to an East European word which meant 'vampire', John Stanley gasped, but Cain told him it could all be nothing more than a gathering of coincidences. However, thanks to the whispers of Cain's servants and the loose tongue of John Stanley, the rumour of a vampire at large in south Liverpool soon became the hot topic of conversation at balls and soirees across the city, and when graphic, scare mongering reports of that other old sinister bogeyman of the night - Spring-Heeled Jack - were reported around that time in the national newspapers, some people began to think that the idea of a vampire at large was not so incredible as it seemed. Was it all happenstance, or did a Greek vampire - a Vyrolakos - awakened from his dreamless sleep in a long-forgotten tomb, once prowl the streets of Liverpool?

A Victorian Vampire Hunt

Before it closed its doors for good in the approaching shadow of the gargantuan Grosvenor Paradise Project, which built the vast ultramodern shopping complex known as Liverpool One, I was a regular visitor to a veritable magpie's nest called Quiggins, a vast store of old books and Victorian and Edwardian antiques tucked away in an old cobbled lane in the backstreets of Liverpool. Early in 2006, I happened to be browsing in a flea market section of Quiggins when I found a scuffed leather-bound book with mildewed end pages, containing old yellowed news clippings and handwritten notes from Victorian times. The theme of the book was Lancashire vampires, and the author is anonymous. The chronicle of Lancashire vampires mentions a 'bloodsucking specimen of the Lost Race of Homo Sapiens' that perpetrated a number of outrages around the time of the first siege of Liverpool in 1643, during the power struggles between Charles I and Parliament. The vampiric man was said to have bitten the necks of a number of women in the town, and was duly captured and transported in chains to Liverpool Castle (which stood where Derby Square is now situated). Alas, the weird-looking man somehow managed to slip from his shackles during the journey, and vanished into the night.

Flipping the pages forward we come to an account of a Victorian vampire hunt, distilled from five cuttings from the Liverpool Mercury newspaper, which starts in the autumn of 1894 at Windermere Terrace, near Prince's Park, Toxteth. A widow, referred to as a Mrs Penny, awoke in the dead of night, unable to move, as something bit into her neck and back. The widow felt blood being drawn and fainted. The next morning she remembered the terrifying incident and wondered if it was a nightmare, until she saw bloodstains on her sheets and pillow. She touched her neck, and felt wounds and clotted blood there. A doctor was summoned and saw four puncture marks, but was at a loss to explain them. His best conjecture was that a sadistic intruder had stabbed Mrs Penny in the neck and back, but the widow said she had felt lips against her skin and had felt the blood being sucked out of her body before she blacked out.

The mystery deepened on the following evening when screams where heard from the nearby Convent of the Faithful Companions of Jesus. Someone had tried to attack one of the nuns after climbing through a

window and had fled through a second floor window after the nun had let out a scream. The police put more constables on the beat in the neighbour hood of the sinister attacks, but the bloodsucking assailant then struck in another part of the city.

The police believed the culprit to be a maniac, and never dreamt that the assailant at large was something that had been reported for thousands of years in every culture upon this earth – a vampire. Extra policemen were put on the beat around the Prince's Park area, but the thing which craved blood struck in another part of the city on the night of Sunday 14 October. A full moon hung high in the sky that night, and at one in the morning, a jaundiced fog drifted in from the Mersey. At around 1.15 am, Mr Edward Blair, a cricket bat manufacturer of 79A Duke Street, was awakened by the sounds of women screaming somewhere nearby. He ran to his window and opened it in time to catch a glimpse of an amorphous black shape flying eastwards at treetop level along Upper Duke Street towards Canning Street, before it was lost to sight in the swirling fog. Minutes after witnessing this frightening spectacle, PC Tom Norris came up Duke Street on his beat and investigated the source of the screams he had heard from as far away as Hanover Street. The hysterical women were the Davies sisters and their cousin Hannah Griffiths at 177 Duke Street. Hannah told the policeman an incredible tale to the young policeman that was backed up by the testimony of the Davies sisters. At midnight Hannah had awakened out of breath, and had therefore opened her window to let in the crisp night air, but by one o'clock the fog was infiltrating the room, so Hannah got up to close the window – and in a corner of the bedroom she was startled to see a woman with a pale ghastly face, large dark staring eyes, long pitch-black hair, clad in a strange black robe that ran to the floor. Hannah screamed, and turned to run for the door, but the sinister female intruder darted across the room and seized Hannah in a vice-like embrace. She threw her on the bed, bit into her neck, and was starting to draw blood when the Davies sisters burst into the room, alerted by Hannah's screams. The sisters screamed in horror at the sight of the thing that was pinning their cousin to the bed. One of the sisters clubbed the eerie assailant on the head with a candlestick but she didn't flinch. Hannah was trying her utmost to push the woman in black off her but the wiry female wouldn't budge. Elizabeth Davies, sensing the thing on top of her cousin was evil, rushed to fetch her bedside Bible from her room, and she returned holding the Holy Book before her. 'In the name of Our

Lord, depart!' she screamed, and the fiend looked up to reveal its horrifying face. It's features twisted, and blood dripped from its contorted mouth before it flitted away from the bed – and dived out of the window. A doctor treated Hannah's neck wound – two neat puncture marks – but was unable to explain what had inflicted the injury. The strange case was passed into the hands of sergeants William Foster and Irwin McGhee, based at Lark Lane police station. Foster believed a demented female attacker was to blame for the assault on Hannah Griffiths, but Irwin McGhee was a devout Catholic and an avid student of the supernatural, and he believed a vampiress was at large. No two men so unlike one another in character had ever been forced to collaborate before, yet Foster and McGhee were required to work together in an effort to unravel the bizarre mystery that had been haunting night-time Liverpool that autumn in 1894.

'A vampire is behind all this,' said Irwin McGhee, sitting at his desk at Lark Lane police station, reading an old leather-bound volume by Dom Calmet, an 18th century authority on vampirism.

Foster's sceptical reply was: 'You know as well as I do McGhee, that Hannah Griffiths was lying; no one can jump out a second floor window without sustaining injury and run off. She was lying because a man friend inflicted those injuries, but what a cock and bull story to tell to cloak the truth, and you believe it all.'

'Then what about the nuns? Were they lying as well?' McGhee queried. On the desk he had a crucifix, a rosary and small phial of holy water.

Foster took a swig of whiskey from his hip flask. 'At the risk of insulting your Catholic mentality, nuns are only human like the rest of us, and when they heard about the bloodsucking maniac a few doors away they had to get in on the act, it stands to reason.'

'How would it profit them? Wake up man,' McGhee glared at his colleague. 'Something is taking place that is beyond your everyday understanding, and unless you start taking this case seriously, you may as well go home.'

After a thoughtful pause, Foster said 'Very well. What do you have there?'

McGhee explained the nature of the vampire, its history, and even local legends of the ancient sanguinarians. McGhee had studied the supernatural since he was sixteen, and he had heard some very eerie tales of vampires in Liverpool from his Irish grandfather. 'At a cemetery in Everton there is said

to be a female vampire,' said McGhee solemnly. 'I have seen the cover of her tomb disturbed periodically, and I think she is behind these recent attacks.'

Midnight found Foster and McGhee at the Everton graveyard in a thick fog – at the very tomb of the suspected vampire. McGhee waited with an iron spike and a hammer as the muscular Foster bravely lifted the loose slab and slid it across the tomb. A lantern was raised to reveal a disintegrated coffin from which a skeletal hand protruded. The coffin lid was slowly lifted by Foster. The head of the skeleton had been severed and lay almost at a right angle to the spinal stump of the neck. There was also a clean hole in the breastplate of the female corpse – where she had been impaled by an occultist – or perhaps even a priest - many years ago. The decapitation was another safeguard to stop the corpse being possessed by a vampire spirit. The slab was respectfully replaced, and McGhee made the sign of the cross and muttered "Rest in peace."

The sergeants returned from their fruitless 'vampire hunt' at the Everton Cemetery and reached the station at 80 Lark Lane just after one in the morning. PC Blackburn dutifully brought the sergeants two hot mugs of cocoa and them told them a curious thing. A drunken man had come into the police station at half-past eleven, asking to see someone about the peculiar goings-on at Duke Street. The man said he had been sent by Edward Blair, one of the witnesses to the recent strange incident. The man had given his name as Edwin Thompson, but had been so heavily intoxicated, PC Blackburn had put him in the holding cells to sleep off his alcoholic stupor. Foster and McGhee hurried to the cells where the shabby-looking inebriate was stretched out snoring on a bench. Shortly after he was roused, he squinted at the sergeants, and gave his full particulars, which came as something of a shock, because he turned out to be an eccentric gentleman of considerable wealth who lived at 20 Canning Street. He told the policemen a remarkable tale. For the past month he had observed a 'phantasm' entering and leaving the house diagonally opposite his own after dark. That house – number 23 - was the residence of a rich gentleman named George Lawson, and night after night, Mr Thompson, his brother, and several servants had watched the eerie comings and goings of a shadowy, gaseous form that floated through the air and entered the roof of Lawson's home. Sergeant Foster didn't know what to make of the weird account, but his colleague McGhee believed Thompson had seen the

vampire responsible for the series of nocturnal attacks in the city. On the following morning, Foster and McGhee paid a visit to George Lawson and informed him that burglars had been seen on his roof, trying the skylight, and during the house call, he seemed very nervous, as if he was hiding something. That night, Foster and McGhee sat in a room at Edwin Thompson's house, keeping watch on Lawson's Georgian residence across the street. Just after midnight, both policemen saw what appeared to be a wisp of dark smoke drifting up from the slates of the roof. The vapour expanded steadily and rose up from the rooftop, leaving a faint misty trail in its wake. William Foster strained his eyes as he watched the apparition slant upwards into the night sky, heading north. It was soon lost to sight. The two sergeants looked at one another, stuck for words for a moment. Minutes later, a quarter of a mile away, in Abercromby Square a widowed woman in her fifties named Magdalene Gee was startled out of her sleep when the veranda doors of her bedroom burst open. Before her eyes a dark mist rapidly condensed into the form of a woman in black. The stranger's face was deathly pale, contrasted by staring, jet-black eyes. She hovered silently towards Magdalene, and the widow, sensing an aura of intense evil about the terrifying phantom, grasped the crucifix hanging from the chain around her neck with a trembling hand, then held it towards the supernatural intruder. The demonic female backed away, made an unearthly hissing sound, and bared long pointed teeth – then once again became a body of dark vapour which drifted out the window into the night air. Magdalene let out a shriek and ran out of the bedroom, and her screams alerted PC Fred Mattinson, passing by the house on his beat. At half-past twelve, Foster and McGhee witnessed the smoky form return to 23 Canning Street via its roof. The news of the sinister Abercromby visitation reached Lark Lane via the Dale Street Detective Office on the following morning. It was time for Foster and McGhee to pay Mr Lawson another visit. They called upon the millionaire just after 4pm as the purple shade of the October dusk was reaching over the western skies of the city.

Once again, the sergeants used the pretence of roof burglars being at large to explain their visit, but Mr Lawson was a canny man, and although he granted the policemen access to inspect the attic for signs of attempted entry, he had an idea what the visit was really about – the vampiric attacks on the women of Liverpool Lawson offered the sergeants a sherry, engaged in small talk, and seemed only too glad when it was time for them to leave.

On the following morning at 11pm, Foster and McGhee called at the home of Edwin Thompson, the well-to-do but perpetually intoxicated gentleman who lived across the street from Lawson. A butler ushered them into the sitting room, and almost a quarter of an hour elapsed before Thompson appeared. He stood swaying before the fire and McGhee asked him if he had seen any unusual guests visiting Lawson's home of late. Thompson leaned on the mantelpiece for support, spent a moment in agonised contemplation, then said that a woman in odd funereal black clothes had arrived at Lawson's house one Sunday several months ago. He had never seen her before and what's more, he had never seen her leave the residence. All of a sudden, Thompson pointed to the window and shouted, 'By Jove! There! There she is!'

The sergeants ran to the window. A carriage had pulled up at the house of Lawson, and the millionaire and a strangely dressed woman in black – with her face covered by a dark veil – were descending the steps. Foster and McGhee flew out of the sitting room and were on the street in seconds. They hailed a hansom cab and instructed the driver to follow the carriage trundling down Canning Street. The pursuit stretched to the Pier Head, where, it transpired, Lawson and the woman intended to board a ship bound for Ireland. Foster and McGhee confronted Lawson, expecting him to threaten them with harassment, but instead, he became melancholic, and told them a bizarre story. The woman with him was his lover, and she was pregnant with his child. Her name was Araminta, and she had been driven out of Hungary because she was the last of a line of vampires that had lived in the country since the days when it was a part of Transylvania. Araminta despised being a vampire, and no man she had loved had ever accepted her for what she was - until she had met Lawson. Now the couple wanted to settle in Ireland for a while before going on to America.

As George Lawson gave this eerie account, Sergeant Foster gazed at the pale ghostly face of Araminta faintly visible through her veil - and he was disturbed to see black tears drip from her eyes as she silently wept. The police sergeant reached for his service revolver, but McGhee seized his hand and said, 'No William!'

'We can't let them go somewhere else where this thing will suck the blood out of other innocent people!' said Foster. His fear was driving him on to shoot the woman. He pushed McGhee away and aimed the gun at the woman in black, who stood there calmly, resigned to her fate. Lawson

threw himself into the firing line of the revolver, and tried to throw a punch at Foster, but missed.

McGhee shouted ‘No!’ as Araminta suddenly climbed over the safety chain on the Landing Stage and jumped into the freezing October river.

Foster stepped over the safety chain and fired the revolver repeatedly into the waters, then McGhee pushed him aside and dived into the waves to save the woman – but only managed to recover her bullet-ridden clothes. Not a trace of Araminta’s body was to be found. Lawson stood staring into the Mersey, sobbing. Araminta was never heard from again. Had the self-tormented vampiress committed suicide, or had she simply made an escape? We will probably never know – unless Araminta returns one day. You may find the aforementioned tale far-fetched, but it actually took place – although whether Araminta was a real vampiress or simply someone with delusions is unknown. The great French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, writing during the Age of Reason and Enlightenment, once stated: ‘If ever there was in the world a warranted and proven history, it is that of vampires. Nothing is lacking; official reports, testimonials of persons of standing, of surgeons, of clergymen, of judges; the judicial evidence is all-embracing.’

A Vampire in Greater Manchester

In County Cavan, Ireland, in the late 19th century, a certain priest, a Father Randall, went to see his local doctor to investigate the source of a nagging pain in his side and a constant ticklish cough. The doctor gave the priest a full examination and some time later he opined that the cleric had tuberculosis. 'How long have I got, doctor?' Father Randall asked. 'About three months, perhaps four,' the doctor replied sombrely.

They say that Father Randall's mother was a witch who practised the darkest form of magic; that she had fallen out with her son because he had chosen Christ, yet when the priest died from consumption, his mother held a wake, and on the second night of this age-old ritual, when all the mourners had gone, she invoked demons to resurrect her son. The demons wanted Mrs Randall's life in return, and took it accordingly exactly a year after the resurrection. The priest woke in his open coffin in the early hours of the morning and threw the rosary that had been placed in his fist across the room. Randall was confused and a little afraid at first, and he went to visit old friend Father Hanlon, an elderly priest in a neighbouring parish to see if he knew why he had been brought back to life. Hanlon saw that Randall couldn't bear to look at a crucifix and seemed equally as edgy when his gaze fell upon the Holy Bible. The old priest knew about vampires from personal experience, and he was well aware of the stance the Catholic Church took regarding vampires: most of them were delusions, but some were dead bodies reanimated by Satan to carry out his schemes. The Vatican decreed that suspected vampires of the latter sort should be exhumed from the grave and burned. No compassion was to be shown towards such ex-humans, according to the Vatican chiefs, and these were laws laid down in an era when babies who died before baptism were staked to prevent them becoming 'minor demons' in Hell. Today, this barbaric law regarding deceased unbaptised children has been repealed, and the Church believes such infants are free of Original Sin, and as such they would return straight to God after death.

Father Hanlon had a long talk with the vampiric ex-priest and advised him to undergo exorcism and allow himself to return to death with a spotless soul, but Randall stormed out of the house and vanished into the night. Hanlon visited Mrs Randall and discovered that the woman was not

only a practising witch; her idol was Crom Cruach, an evil pre-Christian deity of Erin, dating back thousands of years. The stone idol of Crom – covered by goldleaf - stood on the plain of Magh Slécht (the plain of adoration and prostration) in County Cavan, surrounded by twelve lesser graven idols of bare stone. Each year on 1 November (Samhain), a third of the children of the county were sacrificed to Crom Cruach in return for fertile land, good crop yield, disease-free cattle, and good weather. The god was one of the most feared in Ireland, and there are reports of worshippers of Crom Cruach being destroyed in the very act of adoration. The golden idol dedicated to Crom Cruach is thought to have been constructed and erected by Tigernmas, also known as the Lord of Death. Little is known about him, but he may have been a renegade Roman legion commander who had become obsessed with the Occult. One Samhain night, Tigernmas and three quarters of his army were praying prostrate on the floor to Crom Cruach when an unknown force destroyed them all instantly. Some accounts say lightning bolts from the idol of Crom Cruach struck Tigernmas and the worshippers and left nothing but smouldering carbonised corpses. The very name Crom Cruach means “bloody bent one” and is surmised to be a reference to the tall, crooked shadowy entity that lurked behind the idol. It demanded the blood of infants, and the local population supplied this with the throat-slitting of a hundred babies over the idol. From time immemorial the drinking of blood has been identified with the gaining of power, be it for man or a god. The Aztecs, to appease their graven idols, poured blood into their mouths, and the Romans were horrified when several members of the embryonic Christianity sect misinterpreted the symbolic essence of Communion with its ritual partaking of bread and wine. Instead this Christian minority resorted to actual cannibalism and did indeed eat flesh and drink the blood. In the East, the Indian Rajahs eagerly drank blood from severed heads to obtain potency and vigour, and if we look at the Book of Leviticus in the Old Testament, God declares: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life.”

Crom Cruach, the blood-drinking god of old Ireland, was chased into obscurity by St Patrick when he attacked the idol with a sledgehammer and shattered it. The shadowy parasitic thing of pure evil that lived behind the façade of the gilded statue fled County Cavan to an unknown destination,

and some say it resorted to vampiric attacks to satisfy its grand lust for blood. Some occultists and witches who dealt with the most dangerous and negative form of magic continued to worship Crom Cruach, and Mrs Randall, the mother of the resurrected priest, had been one such worshipper, as I have mentioned. Randall boarded a ship at Dublin and sailed for Liverpool, not once coming onto the deck during the crossing, possibly because he had developed a heightened sensitivity to light. He may have stayed below deck by pretending to be ill, but when the ship arrived at Liverpool Docks it was dusk, as the ship had been delayed by a violent storm. Randall travelled through Liverpool to Manchester, and here he was said to have used a newly discovered talent for hypnosis, which he used to 'enslave' several women. Some versions of this tale have him living until the 1930s, when he met a gruesome death through decapitation after being involved in a car crash. Some say that Randall is buried under a false name in All Saints Cemetery, Newton Heath, Greater Manchester, and that his black marble gravestone has a cryptic symbol showing a zig-zag line enclosed in a circle with lines radiating from its perimeter – an ancient pictogram representing Crom Cruach perhaps? There is a strange epilogue to this story. In the 1960s there was a spate of ghost reports at All Saints Cemetery in which a man in a long flowing black robe was seen to fly through the air over the gravestones. A woman living 300 yards away from the cemetery on Briscoe Lane had the misfortune of seeing the ghost one night in 1967 as it looked through her bedroom window. She described the face as being of a ghastly pale colour, and she also made a very intriguing reference. She remarked that the mouth of the ghoul was red, as if it was full of blood, and there was also a deep scar that ran around the entity's neck; the type of scar Randall could have had when they sewed his head back onto his body prior to burial perhaps? The same apparition was seen three times that month. It was seen flying over the wall of a warehouse on Oldham Road at two o'clock in the morning by a nightwatchman, and a policeman also saw the same ghost hovering at the window of an old woman's house at on Gaskell Street at 11pm, but the most terrifying encounter allegedly took place at midnight that month when the black-robed phantom flew after a teenaged girl down Culcheth Lane at one in the morning. Frances Dawson, aged just sixteen, had lost track of time at her boyfriend's house in the Dean Lane area, and she had pleaded with him to escort her to her home in Culcheth, just a twelve-minute walk away. Her

boyfriend said he wasn't feeling too well and Frances stormed off in a huff. As she walked down Culcheth Lane it started to rain heavily, and the girl quickened her pace, but then she realised that someone was walking behind her. She walked on, too afraid to glance back, but the footsteps behind her suddenly ceased, so the teenager thought she was now safe. Then something swooped down on her from the front. It was a grinning white-faced man in a cloak, and he hung in the air as if he was suspended by wires. Frances screamed and ran in the other direction, and as she ran along, she felt a cold hand grabbing at her hair. She was too afraid to look up but she could see the shadow of the flying assailant on the floor as she ran back to her boyfriend's house. When she reached the house, Frances heard laughter above and then silence. She hammered on her boyfriend's door and when his father answered the girl ran past him and hid under the stairs, sobbing. The girl's story was not believed initially, but then the reports of the other sightings of the cloaked fiend were reported in the local papers. The parents of Frances Dawsone went to the local police station to report the weird attacker, but the sergeant there said 'irresponsible pranksters' were obviously to blame. How these jokers floated up to bedroom windows and sailed over twelve foot tall warehouse walls was never explained by the common-sense sergeant. The policeman who had actually seen the apparition levitate up to the window of a house was even accused of being over-imaginative. The constable insisted he had seen the entity and was not prone to imagining things, but was advised to 'shut up'. The sergeant's mundane mind could not take in something extraordinary, so he swept it under the carpet and ignored it. Perhaps the ghostly assailant was just the spectre of one of the many people buried in All Saints Churchyard, or perhaps the vampiric former priest Randall rose from his grave in search of blood.

Vampires of the Road

The lone night-driver knows only two well how the roads and highways seem so deceptive and different during the hours of darkness. The motorist's mind after dark becomes more susceptible to fatigue – and imagination; our worst enemy at night. Some drivers combat this fear by turning on the car radio or CD. The passing landscapes of the roads, bathed in the light of the sodium roadside lamps, become quite eerie. The shadow of a gnarled oak may be perceived as the outline of something supernatural, but sometimes it isn't all in the mind, for there are paranormal entities that haunt roadside Britain, and a few of these may be vampires.

Union Street, in Bedford, runs close to the town's category B prison, and at the point where this street meets Tavistock Street and Clapham Road, you will find a roundabout now exists. Beneath this roundabout lies a staked corpse: the mortal remains of a vampiric highwayman nicknamed Black Tom, who was hanged for highway robbery in 1607. Strange rumours surrounded this bandit, who earned his nickname because of his swarthy, almost yellowish-green skin and coal-black hair. Some said he was a vampire, while others believed he had sold his soul to the Devil. The authorities were warned by the superstitious people of Bedford that Black would rise from his grave if he wasn't staked, and so, after his body was removed to the gallows, and before a huge mob, a man approached with a large hammer and a sharpened wooden stake, four inches in diameter and almost two feet in length. He tore open the dead man's shirt, exposing his breast, then pushed the point of the stake into the corpse's breastbone. A volunteer held the stake in place, and the man brought down the hammer hard seven times. Blood issued from the mouth, nose, and anus of the corpse, and wind thus expelled from the stomach and intestines showered several onlookers with blood and mucous. The corpse started to shudder with post-death nerves, and it was then turned over so Black Tom faced Hell when he was lowered into his deep grave. People spat down the hole as the gravediggers tried to fill it, and that should have been the end of the demonic highwayman, but it was only the beginning. He outlived everyone who had stood at his graveside, for somehow, the highwayman who had been rumoured to thirst for blood, emerged from his grave, and was seen by many of the terrified people of the town, dressed in a long black cape with

his head lolling about as he walked – probably because the hangman's noose had broken his neck. One evening in 1608 the vampire is said to have jumped onto the back of a horse being ridden across a common by a well-to-do lady named Susanna Higgins, who was subjected to a violent attack by Black Tom. Her breasts, neck and thighs were bitten deeply, and Miss Higgins was saved by a passing gentleman named John Gibbons, who was passing in a stagecoach at the time of the assault. Gibbons gave chase but the caped assailant vanished into the dusk. The vampire attacks of Black Tom went on for over two centuries, and at one point, seven priests and a gang of local men and women even attempted to ambush the bloodthirsty highwayman so they could impale him and burn him, but he managed to run off into the night at a superhuman speed. Black Tom was seen up until the 1960s, according to the folklore of Bedfordshire, and in 1963 a motorist from St Albans named George Johnson, ran into the vampire and knocked him down. This happened during the severe winter of 1963 when Mr Johnson was driving along Bedford's Tavistock Street towards the house of his brother-in-law on Clapham Road. The time was just after 10pm and there was a sudden heavy snowfall. The road ahead was deserted, and the windscreen of Mr Johnson's Ford Anglia became coated with large snowflakes. The windscreen wipers were switched on, and moments later the fuzzy outline of a pedestrian came out of nowhere and hurried into the path of the vehicle. Johnson braked hard but hit the person square on. The pedestrian rolled across the bonnet of the car and up over the windscreen then the roof. Johnson saw the person slide down the rear window and into the road. He got out of his car in shock, and proceeded toward the back of the Ford Anglia. A lifeless man in a long cloak lay crumpled on the thin layer of snow on the macadam. The face of the strangely-dressed man was heavily wrinkled, and his hands looked shrivelled. As George Johnson stooped down beside the man to see if he was alive, the old stranger on the floor opened his eyes, which were startlingly bloodshot with pitch-black irises. The ghastly-looking eyes swivelled to survey Johnston, then the odd-looking man got to his feet quickly and ran off into the snowy night. When Johnson reached the home of his brother-in-law, Bob, he mentioned the bizarre heart-stopping collision with the eccentric red-eyed pedestrian, and Bob told him that the same man had been seen in the area many times over the years, and was supposed to be the vampire highwayman Black Tom. George Johnston thought about the intense unnatural redness of the old

man’s eyes and the apparent advanced age of his heavily wrinkled face, and shuddered.

In the late 1960s, two amateur ghost-hunters investigated the alleged sightings of the resurrected 17th century highwayman and came to the conclusion that the vampire had a lair in a wooded area close to the A6 motorway. A vampire hunt was planned but the authorities got wind of the ‘publicity stunt’ and cautioned the ghost investigators. Perhaps Black Tom is now resting in peace at last, as he hasn’t been seen or heard from since 1969 – or is he hibernating?

The following strange story was related to me in September 2001 by a Liverpool comedian whom I cannot identify. He stipulated that he would only relate the full facts of the bizarre and scary tale if I would give him my word that I would never identify him. I shall therefore have to call the comedian 'Bob'.

In the early 1990s, a popular Liverpool comedian named Bob drove up the M62 to Manchester, where he was due to perform a comedy routine as part of a cabaret show. As usual, Bob's performance was warmly received by the audience, and he decided to go back onstage for twenty minutes. While Bob performed his additional material, he noticed a beautiful-looking woman of about 25 to 30 years of age sitting at a table. She was smiling at Bob, and she reminded the comedian of a film actress named Farrah Fawcett Majors, who had enjoyed some popularity in the 1970s. After the comedy act, Bob went backstage and changed, then the manager of the club escorted him to a specially-reserved table for a meal and a drink. Just before the next performer took to the stage, Bob went over to the table were the woman was sitting alone, and he offered her to join him. The woman smiled, and accepted. She was very tall and looked even more attractive at closer quarters. She had sapphire-blue eyes, and long blonde hair. In a soft voice, she said, 'My name's Danielle.' Her accent was not a local one.

Bob ordered champagne and was soon chatting Danielle up. The woman, however, preferred to sip mineral water. There was a stay-behind at the club, and it wasn't long before Bob and Danielle were dancing slowly as they embraced each other. Bob had learned from Danielle that her boyfriend had arranged to meet her at the club, but hadn't turned up for some reason. She had said she lived in St Helens, on the outskirts of Liverpool, and Bob said that as she had not been drinking, she could drive him home to Liverpool in his car. Danielle had said Bob could stay overnight at her

home until he was fit enough to drink in the morning. At 3 a.m., Bob and Danielle left the club in Manchester and walked through the chilly night air towards the club car park. Danielle shivered in her sleeveless top, so Bob gave her his leather jacket. Minutes later the couple embarked on the return journey down the M62. Danielle had to strap Bob's seatbelt on him because he was so intoxicated. During the journey, Bob reached for the controls of the car radio, as he wanted to hear some music to pierce the deadly silence inside the vehicle, but Danielle's hand intercepted his, and so, the couple sat in silence as the car sped along the motorway.

Bob suddenly turned to look at Danielle, and he saw something that still gives him nightmares to this day. The girl's features changed into what can only be described as a demonic face. She turned to him and her eyes turned blood red, and her mouth opened wide - twice as wide as a normal mouth - to reveal an array of long pointed teeth.

The comedian was suddenly sober. He felt faint and breathless with the shock. The girl driving his car was some sort of supernatural entity resembling a vampiress. The thing in his driving seat screamed with laughter and suicidally zig-zagged between the lanes of the motorway. Bob was not a religious man, but he suddenly said, 'Jesus please save me.'

The car screeched into a 180-degree turn and slid off the hard shoulder onto a slip road, where the vehicle veered into a ditch. Bob opened the door and tried to get out, but in the blind panic, he forgot to unclick his seatbelt. He shouted for help and looked at the seat beside him; it was empty, except for his leather jacket. There was no trace of the fiend that had been masquerading as a woman. The police found Bob wandering along the hard shoulder of the M62, and he related his bizarre tale, but wasn't believed. The police checked the club, and the management confirmed that Bob had left with a woman and that she had driven him home. Not one person at the club knew who 'Danielle' was and she was never seen at that club again. Bob was badly shaken by the spine-chilling incident, and has never appeared at the Manchester club since. Every so often, Bob relives the horror of the vampiric woman in his dreams, and on more than one occasion has woken up in a cold sweat. He has no idea why the entity chose him, and wonders what fate he would have met if he had not called upon Jesus to save him. The case is a real puzzler. Will Danielle perform her devilish transfiguration trick on some other unsuspecting male one day? Time will tell.

Myloch and Nesmo

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1754, a private green lacquered horse-drawn carriage prowled Georgian London after nightfall, and its aristocratic-looking passenger was said to entice young and old women into the coach's plush interior so he could have his wicked way with them – and this did not involve any form of sex, but the drawing of large quantities of blood from the females via their necks. The 'gentleman' would begin by gently kissing the necks of the females in a seductive fashion before digging his pointed incisors deep into the tissues of the neck, occasionally piercing the carotid artery – with fatal consequences. The victims of the vampiric attacks, be they alive or dead, were either dumped in a dark alleyway or thrown into the Thames. The haematophiliac (a person having a fetish for drinking blood) who was carrying out these outrageous attacks was said to be an obscure Count named Myloch who had come to London from Gratz in Styria (now a province of Austria). The reports of the aristocratic vampire died down by early December of that year, and most rational-minded people in the capital and elsewhere dismissed the stories of blood-drained women as far-fetched tales, but some claimed Count Myloch had merely left London to satisfy his blood-craving in the country villages of England. A man who was said to be an expert in Satanism believed Myloch was associated with Sir Francis Dashwood's so-called Hellfire Club which met in the chalk-mine caves of West Wycombe. Members of this 'club' allegedly indulged in obscene sex orgies, Devil-worship, hedonism, alcohol and drug abuse, and other indecent activities. Almost a hundred years after the rumours of the Georgian vampire Myloch had faded into folklore, the name Myloch resurfaced in an isolated vampire report in Sussex in the summer of 1851. John Morton, a farm labourer at Pulborough, claimed his sweetheart, a 15-year-old girl named Jane Hubbard, had fought off a strange-looking attacker who had entered her bedroom at night. Jane had awakened at 1am to find a bald yellow-faced man with red eyes and pointed teeth leaning over her. As the intruder lunged forward in an attempt to bite her neck, the teenager slapped his face, grabbed a silver candlestick, and began to club his head as she screamed for help. The girl's uncle, a muscular blacksmith named Joseph, soon entered the room and tried to tackle the weird-looking assailant, but he jumped out the open first-floor

window and landed in the street below before running off at an unearthly high speed. The fiend was later identified as he passed a church by a Mrs Townsend, the local greengrocer. She had also been attacked by the man in her bedroom, and he had also attempted to rape her. The man fled when two men tried to apprehend him, and the mystery deepened when a traveller from Crowborough arrived at a lodging house in Pulborough in the August of that year. The traveller was a man of incredible tales named John Wakefield. He claimed to be a necromancer, an exorcist, a demonologist, a healer, and a hunter of vampires. Furthermore, he claimed that Count Myloch, who had once been at large in London and the Home Counties a century before, was again on the prowl in Sussex. When Wakefield heard about the bald-headed ochre-skinned ghoul described by Jane Hubbard and Mrs Townsend, he set out to hunt down the creature, convinced it was Count Myloch. Using an obscure form of divination with a device in a box that resembled a magnetic compass, John Wakefield roamed an ancient deer park on the slopes of the South Downs, until he came upon an isolated cottage. This proved to be the home of the vampire, but the bloodsucker was too quick for Wakefield, and fled into the night, but not before the vampire-hunter caught a glimpse of the bloodthirsty Austrian parasite's face. It was the very same face Wakefield had seen a year before looking through the bedroom window of his young sister at their home in Crowborough. On that occasion, Wakefield had fired a pistol at Myloch, but he had escaped into the night unscathed. Wakefield pursued Myloch across the country as far as Kent, but the vampire managed to evade capture near Gravesend. Wakefield later claimed that Count Myloch had returned to his old prowling ground – London, and had moved into a palatial old house with another vampire – formerly a Polish man surnamed Nesmo who had committed suicide in 1823. In the early 19th century, all kinds of taboos surrounded the burial of suicides, and elaborate superstitious precautions were taken to prevent the dead person from rising as a vampire. Nesmo was buried face-down at a crossroads near Hamsptead Heath with a stake driven through his mid-section. This barbaric practice was carried out at midnight on unhallowed ground which is now bisected by Spaniards Road. Weeks after the burial, a ghastly-looking figure was seen walking like a somnambulist from the crossroads one night, and Nesmo's grave was later found to be empty. Bodysnatchers, who had perhaps taken the corpse to sell to a medical school, were suspected, but others believed Nesmo had risen

from his grave as a vampire. Strangely enough, in the 1920s, there was a gruesome but intriguing report about a group of children who would often pay a visit to the ‘vampire’s house’ – the nickname of a crumbling old mansion on the Belsize estate, within a stone’s throw of Spaniards Road. A 12-year-old child named Susan Browne was challenged by her peers to put her hand through the front-door letter box of the mansion, and so she playfully lifted the brass flap, inserted her hand into the slot – and began to scream. Moments later the girl collapsed with blood spurting from her hand. Two of her fingers were missing. They’d been bitten off at the knuckles. The police made a forced entry into the house and discovered that no one had lived in it for several years, and they found no evidence of any recent squatters.

Rumours of a Royal Vampire

The grim forbidding Glamis Castle stands in the great vale of Strathmore in Tayside, in the north-east of Scotland. For centuries the vast fortified castle with its pointed towers has had a sinister reputation for housing an unspeakable, terrible secret, but just what is this dreadful secret? It is said that only certain members of the British Royal Family know, but there have been whispers and bloodcurdling rumours circulating about the secret of Glamis Castle for hundreds of years, and these strange claims are the subject of the following accounts.

It is known that the Glamis Secret has nothing to do with a stubborn bloodstain that cannot be removed from the floorboards in one of the castle rooms. That stain is the blood of King Malcolm II, who was cut down by the Claymore swords of his rebellious subjects in the castle in the year 1084; nor is the secret anything to do with the fact that Lady Glamis was burnt at the stake outside the castle for practising witchcraft, although her ghost still walks the corridors of Glamis as the Grey Lady. No, the secret of Glamis Castle lies in solving the following grotesque jigsaw puzzle of weird events.

If you stand outside the castle and count the number of windows, and compare them with the number of windows inside the building, you will always be two windows short; in other words, there seems to be a walled-up secret room in Glamis, and what this room contains has been the subject of much debated for over 600 years. No one knows where this secret room is, but some say it is on the top story of the castle inside a tower. Then there is another clue; over the centuries, servants have claimed to have heard strange thuds on the walls of the building, and one of the Earls of Strathmore said he once overheard King James V mentioning the thing locked up in its room. Many servants at the time speculated that the 'thing' was a deformed overgrown child, the product of the continual inbreeding over the centuries within the aristocracy. Some researchers believe this might just be the case, for in an oil painting at the castle, there is a strange green-clad figure of a child with a strangely-deformed torso. The identity of the painting's subject has never been established.

In the year 1486, a particular nasty event occurred at Glamis Castle when a party of neighbouring aristocrats called the Ogilvies came to Glamis

and begged for protection from their sworn enemies, the Lindsay family. The Ogilvies were escorted to a chamber under the castle and left there without food or water for over a month. When the chamber was opened, only one of the Ogilvies was barely alive. He had eaten the other members of his family through starvation. In the 17th century, it was said that an unfortunate black slave was stripped naked and hunted 'as fun game' by the Earls and their hunting dogs. The slave was repeatedly impaled with lances and the dogs literally ripped him apart while the ladies of the castle looked on in laughter. The murdered slave's ghost may be the strange figure known as Jack the Runner, who has been seen darting about the castle as he screams as if in agony.

Around the time the slave was hunted to death, a young maiden from the local village who was involved with one of the Earls was said to have stumbled on the secret chamber in Glamis, and whatever she saw must have been terrifying, because she ran screaming from the castle, and was later captured by two Royal henchmen. One of these henchmen took a pair of iron tongs, ripped out the young lady's tongue and threw it on the fire. This is known as the Ritual of Silencing, and had been performed on several servants over the years who had inadvertently stumbled upon the Glamis Secret. The shock of having the tongue wrenched out at the root usually killed the victim and they usually bled to death anyway, but the poor aforementioned young maiden ran out of the castle dungeon minus her tongue in a state of terror with blood spurting out of her mouth. The henchmen went after her and one of them grabbed her in a headlock, then twisted her head until her neck broke. The body was then meticulously sawed up and fed to the wild boars in the forest.

The unmentionable secret of Glamis was briefly touched upon in 1904 when the 13th Earl of Strathmore, Claude Bowes-Lyon, told an inquisitive friend, "If you could only know the nature of the terrible secret, you would go down on your knees and thank God it were not yours." The meaning of the Earl's cryptic remark only deepens the mystery, but the friend he spoke to later claimed that he had found the secret chamber, and he was quickly bundled off to the colonies; some say he was sent to Australia.

Early in the 20th century, when the daughter of the 14th Earl of Glamis asked what the secret was, her father told her, "You cannot be told; for no woman can ever know the secret of Glamis Castle."

It is claimed that certain members of the Royal Family know of the terrible secret, and they are all males. It is said that they are traditionally told on their 18th birthday, but none of the Royals has ever commented on or denied the secret of Glamis Castle.

Curiously, a female vampire has allegedly been sighted in the grounds of the castle from time to time, and legend has it that she is visiting her child, a half-human half-vampire, or 'dhampir' as such hybrids are called. In 1885, an enthusiastic collector of literature on historical oddities named George Blizard wrote to a private investigator named John Meikeljohn at his office in York Buildings, Adelphi, London. Blizard said he was prepared to offer Meikeljohn a very substantial amount of money if he could uncover the so-called Glamis Secret. Meikeljohn declined, recognising the fact that the Royals were a powerful family who could destroy his career and perhaps imprison him if he delved into their secrets. Blizard therefore sat down in the study of his Bloomsbury home and wrote to another private detective named Collinson, of Savoy Street, but he also turned down the collector's offer. Finally, when word of Blizard's offer was mentioned at a gentleman's club, two adventurers named Edward Rye and John Grimstone, took up the intriguing but dangerous and controversial challenge. They both applied for employment at Glamis Castle, but only one – Edward Rye – was accepted as a junior butler. John Grimstone found lodgings at a cottage several miles from the castle, and the two men communicated by sending Morse messages to one another. Grimstone sent his message by covering and uncovering a bull's eye lantern, and his colleague imparted information by doing the same with a candle at one of the windows of Glamis Castle after dark. The two occasionally met during various days of the week when Mr Rye was sent to the local village to order groceries for the cooks of the castle. According to Rye, in the relatively short time he'd been employed at the castle, he had met two members of staff – a footman and a young female servant - who had enthusiastically talked at length about the Glamis Secret. Both their stories mentioned a vampire that inhabited a secret room in one of the turrets. This vampire was the result of some curse on the bloodline of the Earls of Strathmore, and the creature was allowed to walk on the roof of the castle most nights. The vampire could not be killed because it had Royal blood in its veins and was regarded as a member of the Earl's family. Fresh human blood was allegedly taken up to the vampire every few days, and the origin of this 'nourishment' remained a mystery. The young maid told how,

on one occasion when the Earl of Strathmore and his family were away, the staff hung towels from every window in Glamis Castle, then went outside to see that there were several windows where no towel was evident, because they were the windows of the secret chambers where the Royal vampire was allowed to roam.

John Grimstone corresponded with George Blizard about the extraordinary claims, and the latter sent more money to the two investigators to encourage them to look a little deeper into the strange goings-on at Glamis Castle. Weeks afterwards, Edward Rye was awakened at almost three in the morning by a female scream. Rye stumbled out of bed in his long-johns and went into the corridor outside his room with a candle. At the end of the corridor the senior butler barred his way and strongly advised Rye to return to his bed. Rye said that the scream seemed to have come from the upper floors, but in a stern voice, his senior told him to go back to his room immediately. After that night, the young maid who had told Edward Rye about the vampire was curiously absent. Edward Rye attempted to gain access to the secret chambers in one of the turrets of the castle, but he was caught by a member of staff and sacked. Rye and Grimstone returned to London and refused to take any more money of Mr Blizard, feeling they had failed in their mission.

Could there be any truth in the story of a Royal vampire? Queen Mary, the consort of George V, was related to Vlad the Impaler, a barbaric Transylvanian ruler who once killed more than 100,000 Turkish soldiers by having them impaled on long spiked wooden poles as he dipped his bread in their blood at an open-air banquet overlooking the scene of mass carnage. The psychopathic Transylvanian was known as Dracula, Romanian for “son of the Devil”, and he is thought to have been a major inspiration for Bram Stoker’s famous vampire novel, Dracula. Prince Charles then, is a direct descendant of Vlad Dracula, and in November 1998, when His Royal Highness visited Transylvania during a tour of Eastern Europe, he told newspaper and television reporters covering his trip that he was aware of his infamous Transylvanian ancestor. The Freedom of Information Act of 2000 is an Act of Parliament that introduced a public ‘right to know’ – but only in relation to public bodies; it could not be applied to secrets of the British monarchy. The macabre secret of Glamis Castle will therefore remain a secret for many years to come.

In the Midst of Death They Are in Life

A vampire may exist as a dead body which continues to paradoxically 'live' in its grave until night-time, when it crawls forth out of it temporary resting place to go in search of blood and *prana* - the very life-force essence of a human – to sustain nourishment. Many years ago at a cemetery in Lancashire, a father died and could not be buried in the family plot because there were four coffins already in the grave. The sons were baffled, as there should have only been three coffins in the grave, and some assumed that the fourth coffin had been interred by mistake. One of the sons prised open the coffin lid and was amazed to see it was not even fastened down with screws. In the satin-lined coffin there rested a rosy-cheeked stranger in expensive-looking clothes of velvet and silk. On his fingers he wore a collection of dazzling rings, and the dead man's face was described as having 'a distinctly aristocratic profile'. The sons entered the cemetery after dark with spades to remove the stranger from the family grave to make room for their father's coffin. When they opened the unidentified coffin, they were shocked to find it completely empty. There had been recent reports of the 'vaporous' ghost of a distinguished-looking man who haunted the cemetery, and a local priest believed the apparition was that of a vampire who had been seen floating over the gravestones late in the grey foggy November afternoons a fortnight before. Gravediggers had told the priest about strange tunnels in the same burial ground, of moved coffins, and disturbed corpses – all indications of a vampire lair under the cemetery. There have been many well-documented cases of 'moving coffins' and other baffling subterranean mysteries concerning graveyards printed in the newspapers of the world, and there is a strong possibility that many of these unquiet graves are the result of vampire activity. Here are just a few accounts of corpses that have been busy after death.

Situated in the icy expanses of the Baltic Sea, the bleak rocky island of Oesel is better known for the whiskey it exports to the world, but in the 19th century, the island became the talk of Europe for much less mundane reasons: the sinister 'unquiet graves' saga.

Upon the island of Oesel on June 22, 1844, Mrs Dalmann, the wife of a local tailor, rode a cart carrying her two children up the long lonely lane which ran parallel to the town cemetery. Mrs Dalmann was going to visit

her mother's grave as she did every month. The cart trundled past the many chapels adjoining the cemetery which had been built by the island's wealthier families and finally came to a halt in front of the Buxhoewden family chapel, where Mrs Dalmann hitched the horse to a post. She then went into the cemetery with her two children, clutching a bouquet of flowers, ready to pay her quiet respects to her much missed mother at the graveside.

Quarter of an hour later, Mrs Dalmann and her children returned to the cart and found the horse acting hysterically. It was lathered in perspiration and had almost uprooted the post to which it had been tethered. Mrs Dalmann tried her utmost to calm the horse down, but the animal reared up on its hind legs and seemed terrorised by something. Mrs Dalmann called out a veterinarian to treat her animal, and he bled the horse - which was a common practice to remedy almost anything in those days. The horse finally settled down, and the vet suggested that the animal had perhaps been stung by a bee.

On the following Sunday the same phenomenon happened again, this time to three horses simultaneously. All the horses that had been tied to posts outside the Buxhoewden Chapel were found quivering and acting strangely when their owners came out to mount them. The same explanation was offered by the vet who had treated Mrs Dolman's horse: bee stings. However, on the very spot where the four horses had been terrified by something, a number of villagers heard heavy rumbling sounds emanating from the Buxhoewden family vault beneath the chapel. Over the next few days, the strange subterranean disturbances continued to be heard, and eerie rumours about the unquiet graves of Buxhoewden chapel began to circulate through the town. The strange gossip finally reached the ears of the Buxhoewden household via the servants, but the weird tale was dismissed as the slanderous invention of some enemy of the family. The tittle-tattle about the supernatural goings-on in the vault refused to die down, so the Buxhoewdens informed the authorities and arranged for them to witness the reopening of the vault in an effort to end the silly rumours. When the Buxhoewden family vault was opened, the investigators found a chilling surprise awaiting them. All of the coffins were piled on top of one another in the centre of the vault. Three members of the Buxhoewden family and the party of official investigators took half an hour carrying the heavy coffins back to their iron racks which were mounted around the walls

of the vault. No one spoke so much as a word within the vault during this time because the air seemed charged with a terrible presence of dread. When all of the living had left the underground chamber of the dead, the vault was locked and molten lead was poured over the broken seals of the door as a precaution against any future tampering. The Buxhoewdens and the group who had accompanied them into the vault racked their brains trying to think of a natural explanation which could account for the stacked coffins, but no such explanation was forthcoming. It was therefore agreed that the incident should be kept secret from the people of Oesel.

On the third Sunday of that July, eleven horses tethered to posts outside the Buxhoewden chapel became hysterical during evening Mass. Half of the unfortunate creatures fell down and resisted all attempts by their owners to make them stand. Three of the horses died where they fell, while others became so frenzied they snapped their reins and galloped off in blind panic. Throughout all this commotion, the chapel-goers felt strange throbbing vibrations pounding the ground beneath them. The localised tremors were evidently coming from the exact spot where the Buxhoewden family vault was located.

The mystery of the restless dead beneath the chapel could no longer be kept secret, and the people who had lost their horses together with a mob of the town's superstitious inhabitants joined forces and sent a petition to the Consistory - the supreme governing church body which periodically held official hearings regarding religious visions and supernatural incidents. While the tardy white-haired elders of the Consistory considered what actions to take over the rumbling vaults, one of the Buxhoewdens died. After the funeral, several members of the wealthy family melted the seals of the now infamous vault and unlocked its heavy six-inch reinforced doors. Once more, they found the coffins in a stack in the centre of the vault, and this time there were strange marks on one of the larger coffins, as if it had been battered and chipped by something. The Buxhoewdens and several brave volunteers positioned the coffins back onto their iron wall racks and quickly retreated from the vault. The locks were changed this time and fresh lead was poured onto the seals around them. Word got out of this second bizarre incident, adding more fuel to the creepy rumours of the jumping coffins in the Buxhoewden vault. Now the people of Oesel feared something evil was at large on their island and they made further demands to the sluggish Consistory to take immediate action. The church court

decided to act under this growing pressure, and they opted for a thorough investigation of the haunted vault. The President of the Consistory, Baron De Guldenstubbe, went along to the vault with two members of the Buxhoewden family. He noted that the doors were locked and their lead seals had not been broken or tampered with in any way. Another witness was summoned and he observed the Baron and the two Buxhoewdens break the seals, unlock the door, then enter the vault with lanterns. This witness was given permission to enter the vault, and when he did, he came upon a most distressing scene. This time, the coffins were scattered everywhere in disarray, and some of them had been smashed open, partially revealing the decomposed corpses they contained. There was no way grave-robbers could have tunnelled into that vault, which was lined with thick slabs of granite. The slabs were intact, and there was no evidence of any secret openings to the vault. Furthermore, had grave-robbers been responsible for the gross acts of desecration, they would certainly have taken the diamond rings and other items of jewellery from the bodies.

New coffins were brought into the vault and the bodies were put into them. Someone suggested sprinkling fine wood ashes on the floor of the crypt so that the ghouls responsible for the grim deeds would leave their footprints behind. This ingenious suggestion was taken up, and a fine layer of ash was duly sprinkled on the vault floor. The Buxhoewden vault was then locked and sealed once again, but the Baron De Guldenstubbe still suspected foul play by persons unknown who were perhaps tunnelling into the chamber, so he employed workmen to dig a six-foot deep trench around the vault and posted armed guards at the crypt's entrance. After seventy-two hours, the Baron turned up unannounced with two of the Buxhoewdens and stormed the troubled vault. Inside, they found all the coffins off their wall racks, each of them standing on end against the wall. On the floor, there were no footprints in the layer of ash. This left the Baron and the Buxhoewdens completely baffled - and somewhat afraid of the dark forces which were apparently at work in the crypt.

Baron De Guldenstubbe filed his report to the Consistory, and the only suggestion they had regarding the unexplained disturbances was to bury the Buxhoewden coffins elsewhere. This was subsequently done, and the old family vault was sealed up for good.

The mysterious movements of the coffins in the Buxhoewden vault are paralleled in similar accounts of mobile burial caskets that have been

reported in various countries. According to church records at Stanton, in Suffolk, a vault belonging to a French family became the source of loud thudding sounds one evening in the mid-18th century. When the vault was opened for an additional internment in 1755, the large lead-covered burial caskets were found scattered about the place. One of the coffins was resting on the fourth step on the stairway leading out of the crypt, and was so heavy, it took eight men to reposition it on its wooden bier. Grave-robbers were initially blamed, but the locks on the vault hadn't been tampered with, nor had the seals.

A similar mystery was investigated on island of Barbados in the 19th century. This was the so-called mystery of the 'creeping coffins'. The chilling story dates back to 1724, when the Walronds, a rich family of planters, constructed a magnificent blue Devon marble tomb at Christ Church, Barbados. The locals thought the ostentatious tomb was more of a fortress than a resting place of the dead. The floor space measured 12 feet in length, almost 7 feet in width, and was sunk into the ground. For some inexplicable reason, none of the Walronds were interred in their tomb. The first body that was interred there was that of Mrs Thomasina Goddard on July 31, 1807. In the following year, the vault came into the possession of the wealthy slave-owning family of Thomas Chase, who purchased it to entomb two daughters in 1808 and 1812. When the Chase tomb was reopened in July 1812 to lay Dorcas Chase to rest, the coffins containing the Chase daughters were seen to be standing on their heads. Thomas Chase, the head of the family never recovered from the shock of seeing the inverted coffins and he became so mentally disturbed he committed suicide a month later. On August 9 his heavy lead-lined coffin was also placed in the vault by eight pallbearers. On September 25 1816, the Chase vault was reopened to receive the coffin of Samuel Brewster Ames, a little boy who was distantly related to the Chase family. Once again the coffins in the vault were found disarranged. Only the burial casket of Mrs Goddard was still in its original place. The other coffins looked as if something had scattered them across the vault. There was little the enraged mourners could do but return the coffins to their rightful places. Later that year, on November 17, the vault was opened once more for the internment of Samuel Brewster, whose coffin was being transferred from its original grave in a St Philip churchyard. The sinister reputation of the vault was now so well-known, crowds of curious people gathered around it in eager anticipation of further

developments. They were not disappointed, because once more it was discovered that the coffins of the chase tomb had been thrown about again. The coffin containing Mrs Goddard had been battered open and her remains had been exposed. The desecration was linked with an abortive slave rising that had been severely subdued by the authorities with much bloodshed earlier that year, but that connection was later ruled out, as there was no way anybody could have entered the stronghold of the Chase tomb.

On July 17, 1819, the vault was opened and the coffin of Thomasina Clarke was taken inside. Outside the crypt, the Viscount Combermere, the Governor of Barbados, and two of his officials waited with bated breath, along with hundreds of hushed spectators. Yet again, the coffins were lying about the tomb in different directions. Viscount Combermere was allowed in and was baffled by the scene that met his eyes. He had watched the masons cutting free the marble slab door of the tomb, and had seen the exertion on the faces of the slave gang who had dragged that slab aside. He wondered what force or entity could have invaded such an impenetrable crypt to throw the coffins about. After the coffins were lugged back to their original positions, fine-grained sand was sprinkled over the entire floor. This would surely reveal the traces of the mysterious desecrator, the Viscount reasoned. This time when the vault slab was closed, the Viscount left the impression of his seal in the cement.

By April of the following year, burning curiosity had gotten the better of everybody on the island, and they begged the Viscount Combermere to reopen the Chase tomb to see if anything had happened. After a protracted debate on the requests of the islanders, the Governor of Barbados bent to public pressure, and he authorised the reopening of the notorious vault. The seals on the cement were intact, yet when the interior of the crypt was inspected, the coffins were again found strewn across the vault. Whatever had moved the coffins had done it with such violence, there were large dents in the walls of the chamber made by the impact of the lead coffins, and yet there were no marks in the sand on the floor of the vault. Viscount Combermere - a fearless man who had been one of the Duke of Wellington's finest cavalry commanders - later admitted that his blood had ran cold when he saw the state of the vault and the positions of the coffins that day. In the end, the Viscount had the coffins removed from the accursed tomb and had them buried elsewhere. The Chase tomb was put on the market, but because of it eerie reputation it was never purchased and still

lies empty. Even today, people on the island will not venture near the black mouth of the open tomb's entrance after dusk.

In the 1950s, a cemetery at Bebington, Wirral was said to be haunted by an entity that emerged out of holes in the ground. The opening of these outlets were as small as rabbit holes in some places, yet a six-foot-tall man in black was seen to emerge from them as a vapour which quickly solidified. The strange being was seen initially by an elderly woman who was going to place flowers on her daughter's grave one dusky October afternoon in 1952. This pensioner saw a cone of 'smoke' issue from the ground, and as she looked on, the vapour slowly solidified into the figure of a tall man who stood looking at her with an expression of contempt. His arms were folded, and the pensioner turned around and walked quickly in the other direction. The same vaporous man in black was seen by many other people in the cemetery until 1959. Incidentally, there is a grave at this cemetery in Bebington that contains the body of a Birkenhead woman who passed away in the early 1960s. The woman – Mrs Emily Filer – died at the age of 69 from a cerebral haemorrhage, but her 33-year-old son was so distressed at losing his beloved mother, he attempted to bring her back to life by digging down to her coffin and 'rescuing' her from decay in the realm of worms. In the mind of this man, who was unhinged by utter grief, he believed that instead of waiting for the mass resurrection of Judgement Day, he could revive his mum. He decided he would first infuse chemical-based energy into the lifeless body by stuffing its mouth with glucose sweets. He then resorted to wiring his mother up to the mains electricity supply in an effort to resurrect her. Perhaps the muscles of the corpse twitched and spasms rippled through the decrepit limbs, but the spark of life could not be rekindled. Sometimes it's hard to let a loved person leave our life, but when death takes them, there is little we can do except hope they are at peace, and if we have sufficient faith, we may look forward to joining them in the hereafter one day.

The Frankenstein-like son was watched by curious neighbours entering and leaving a certain house that served as his ad hoc laboratory, and in the end the authorities swooped on this grim abode and came upon the exhumed corpse, laying on its unfurled burial shroud with sweets contained in its bulging cheeks and wires trailing from the decaying body to the mains outlets. The police were sympathetic towards the son, and no charges were brought against him. The old woman was solemnly re-interred in Bebington

Cemetery, were she silently awaits that promised day when the dead shall rise from their graves.

If a vampire can cheat death by rising from the grave, can they survive disasters that no human could live through? What would happen to a vampire if he or she was on a sinking ship at sea? The following strange story may give us an indication of the resilience of the vampire's physical constitution.

There are many sane and respected people around the world today who intend to have their bodies 'put on ice' when they expire. Their frozen corpses will be stored in liquid nitrogen at a temperature of minus 196 degrees centigrade until a future time when advances in medical technology will allow the deep-frozen dead to be resurrected. These attempts at cheating death through freezing are practical examples of the relatively young science of applied cryonics. The Cryonics Society of California is a pioneer in this field and started freezing newly-dead bodies in 1967, but there are now cryonic storage societies starting up in other parts of the world.

Many scientists still regard the prospect of cryogenic immortality as a slim and laughable chance, because it is still difficult if not impossible to freeze human tissue fast enough to avoid vital-cell destruction. This problem will undoubtedly be resolved in the not-too-distant-future, and already rudimentary human embryos have been successfully frozen at sub-zero temperatures. Moral watchdogs are concerned at the pace of progress in cryonics, and recent legislation in Britain has limited the period scientists can hold the embryos in cold storage.

We don't have to look to cryogenics to see examples of deep-frozen mammals; nature has already beaten us to it. In the summer of 1977, a perfectly-preserved specimen of a six-month-old baby mammoth was disinterred by a bulldozer from permafrost in the Yakutsk Republic of the former USSR. This baby mammoth, nicknamed Dinah, is over ten thousand years old. In 1900, a larger Russian mammoth was found in Berezovka standing upright in the Arctic permafrost. The frozen beast was so perfectly preserved by the sub-zero temperatures that the ancient buttercups it had been eating when it died were still stuck to its tongue. No reason has ever been given to explain why the mammoth died so suddenly it never had a chance to swallow the flowers, but the beast seems to have been literally frozen in its tracks.

Human bodies that have been frozen naturally in Arctic conditions have been reported from time to time. In August 1984, scientists chipped through five feet of gravel and permafrost on Beechley Island, which is situated at the entrance to Canada's Wellington Channel. What the excavating scientists came upon was breathtaking - three graves containing the bodies of sailors who had died in 1846. One of the corpses was perfectly preserved. The body was subsequently identified as that of seaman John Torrington of the ill-fated Franklin Arctic expedition. Sir John Franklin had left England in 1845 on a mission to find the Northwest Passage, a long-sought sea route from the Atlantic to the Pacific by way of Canada's arctic islands. The British Government and its Admiralty were confident that Franklin would find the Passage, and they gave him two ice-region ships named 'Erebus' and 'Terror' which had been completely overhauled and refitted for the expedition. Franklin and his men perished in the Arctic Circle before they could find the Northwest Passage, but the fate of the ships is unknown. However, in 1851, the captain and crew of a brig named 'Renovation' were astounded to see two full-sized ships perched on top of a huge iceberg in the North Atlantic. Two old seadogs on the 'Renovation' identified the ships through a telescope; they were the frozen wrecks of 'Erebus' and 'Terror'. The 19th century ice-bound wrecks were allegedly seen once more in the early 1950s still embedded in a berg.

There have also been more sinister reports of people frozen in ice. The following story was buzzing across the Internet in the late 1980s and was even reported in a BBC radio bulletin in Britain.

According to the story, in March 1988, towards the end of the Cold War, a Russian destroyer was on manoeuvres in the North Atlantic, about 800 miles south of Iceland, when a lookout on the ship with high-powered binoculars spotted an iceberg on the horizon. There was nothing unusual about an iceberg being in that area of the ocean in March, but what excited the lookout was the curious dark spot he could see on the iceberg. As the berg floated nearer to the destroyer, the lookout zoomed in on the dark spot, and sighed in disbelief; the dot was the figure of a woman lying on a ledge, covered in a thin layer of ice. She was dressed in a black jacket and a long black dress, and was lying on her back.

The captain of the destroyer immediately dispatched a motorboat to take a closer look. Two divers left the boat and swam over to the ledge of the iceberg to take a closer look at what was obviously the frozen corpse from

some sea disaster. Three more men, including a physician, came off the ship and spent almost an hour freeing the body from the ice. The woman, who looked about twenty-five to thirty years old, was perfectly preserved, except for one ankle, which was blackened by the tissue-destroying ice crystals. However, the outdated clothes she wore indicated that she had been frozen for a long time, perhaps fifty years or more. The corpse was put into a body bag and taken on board the Russian destroyer, where it was put in refrigeration until the ship returned to the Soviet Union.

The corpse was then transferred to a military hospital in Leningrad and slightly thawed to just under room temperature. The woman's face looked fresh and rosy, presenting the illusion that she was only sleeping. During the examination of the female, her eyelids flew open. It seemed to be just a reflex action, and not a sign of life. The blue eyes were slightly bloodshot, but looked animated. All of the scientists present recoiled in shock. The eyes then rolled upwards and the eyelids of the corpse flickered, and then closed. One report said that the scientists tried unsuccessfully to resuscitate the corpse by firing a high voltage current through its chest with a special defibrillator, but the lungs were full of ice and the other internal organs were damaged beyond repair. However, there were later reports of the woman being successfully revived.

In the pockets of the woman's coat, several papers and belongings were found. A brooch, a purse with old money that dated to the early 1900s, and a number of documents which stated that the woman had been a passenger on the *Titanic* liner, which sank after hitting an iceberg 350 miles south-east of Newfoundland in 1912.

It was surmised that the woman had probably fallen or jumped overboard from the stricken vessel, and had probably somehow been swept onto one of the icebergs drifting through the waters. The story was reported in some Russian satellite states, but the Soviet Union allegedly hushed up the strange find because the Russian destroyer that came across the ice-bound corpse had been involved in electronic eavesdropping on very-low-frequency broadcasts from American submarines. The woman had allegedly sailed as a second class passenger on the ill-fated *Titanic*, and had originated from London, but the authorities in the USSR provided no further information on this intriguing case. What else, but a vampire, could survive the *Titanic* disaster and remain frozen in ice for over seven decades? Could a vampire have been the seemingly indestructible person

who survived the following maritime disasters? In 1664, a ship sank with 81 passengers on board in the Menai Strait off north Wales. There was one survivor: a red-haired man named Hugh Williams. On December 1785, a ship sank with 80 passengers on board, again in the Menai Strait. The only survivor was a red-haired man named Hugh Williams. In the year 1800, a ship sank in the Menai Strait with 25 people on board, and all the passengers drowned except for one: a red-haired man named Hugh Williams.

A High-Class Vampiress

I've had to change a few of the details given in the following story, because the female at the centre of this account is possibly the great-grandmother of a family of note in Cheshire, and a person in this family gave me the tale on the understanding I would never reveal a surname or any facts that would allow a local historian to identify the family or ancestor concerned.

In the late Victorian period, at one of the most prestigious addresses in the city of Bath, there resided a beautiful Cheshire-born lady named Georgina Fontaine, the wife of a famous, fabulously rich merchant named Charles Fontaine. The couple lived in a four-storey townhouse with a retinue of hand-picked servants. They holidayed three times a year, at Switzerland, Scotland and France, and entertained the most influential families in the Empire. The Fontaines were the envy of many people, such was their wealth and apparent contentment with their carefree life of luxury. Georgina Fontaine was a rather aloof person who seemed like a cold fish to the servants, but each year she allotted various sums of money to several local charities.

One foggy autumnal morning, Lady Fontaine was in the drawing room, playing her piano, when the butler, Desmond, entered. Georgina stopped playing and looked at the elderly servant.

'There is a Mrs Rigby who wishes to see you ma'm,' intoned Desmond, his nostrils flaring to denote that the visitor was of the lower classes.

Lady Fontaine returned a puzzled look, for she knew no one by the surname of Rigby.

Desmond had asked the middle-aged caller to the household if she had an appointment with Lady Fontaine, and the woman had shaken her head and admitted that no such prior arrangement had been made, but Mrs Rigby insisted that her brother had known Lady Fontaine for a while when she was in India. Now Mrs Rigby had something urgent to relate to the lady of the household that related to the time she'd spent at Bengal. Lady Fontaine seemed very edgy all of a sudden when she heard about this unknown visitor, but she asked Desmond to bring her into the drawing room anyway.

Mrs Elizabeth Rigby was a large dowdily dressed woman of fifty-one years of age with a rotund rosy-cheeked face. She smiled nervously as she

entered the drawing room, and Lady Fontaine dismissed Desmond then told Mrs Rigby to sit on the carved and gilt Louis XIV-style sofa. The visitor revealed the sole purpose of her visit: blackmail.

For five months in the summer of 1892, Lady Fontaine had sent 17 love letters to Colonel Lionel Wingate, a married friend of her husband. The lady and the colonel had enjoyed an affair that had lasted almost a year, and Lizzie Rigby, a former maid at the colonel's Bath residence on Landsowne Road, had somehow come into possession of three love-letters Lady Fontaine had sent to the colonel, and also a pencil drawing Mr Wingate had made of a nude Lady Fontaine. Rigby wanted one-hundred pounds in return for the love-letters and the sketch, or she would send them to Charles Fontaine. Lady Fontaine barely reacted to the hideous stipulation, but merely requested the address for the place where the transaction could take place. Lizzie Rigby stammered out the rendezvous – the stable of her employer, Miss Robinson at Park Gardens, Audley Road, at 11pm - tonight. Lady Fontaine said she would travel there by carriage at the appointed time with the money.

Unknown to Lady Georgina Fontaine and her blackmailer, the butler Desmond had been listening at the door of the drawing room, so he was now privy to the secret of the adulterous affair. The butler was very loyal to Lady Georgina and he seriously considered visiting Lizzie Rigby in the evening with a pistol to extract the damaging letters and drawing. Desmond decided it was better for Lady Georgina to resolve the situation in the end, but that night, he was surprised when he saw her sneak out of her mansion by the tradesmen's entrance at the rear of the house. He had understood that she would be travelling to the rendezvous point by carriage. This was most peculiar, and Desmond worried for Lady Fontaine's safety, so he followed her at a distance. An autumn fog rolled inland from the Bristol Channel that night and blanketed Bath, and Desmond soon lost sight of Lady Georgina in the swirling jade night vapours. The pea-souper played havoc with the old butler's bronchitis, forcing him to return to the mansion. When he arrived there twenty minutes later, the cook, Mrs Jones, told him that Lady Georgina had retired to bed quarter of an hour ago. Desmond knew that was impossible, even if Lady Fontaine had returned from the blackmailer's rendezvous in a hansom cab. He wondered if Lady Georgina had decided not to give in to Mrs Rigby and returned home. The next evening, Desmond read an intriguing piece of information in the local newspaper. At a cottage

on Audley Road named Harcroft, a maid of 51 years of age, named Elizabeth Rigby had died in her bed around midnight from what a physician termed ‘night terrors’ – a nightmare of such vivid intensity, the fear had stopped the maid’s heart. The deceased had obviously clawed at her own neck during the nightmare, for her fingernails had scraped deep red furrows in the neck. The expression on the face of the dead woman was one of abject terror.

Two days later, Desmond read a strange epilogue to the night terrors incident in the same newspaper. A coroner had found several puncture marks on the breasts and face of Mrs Rigby, including a puncture mark in the right eyeball. The coroner also believed several pints of blood were absent from the corpse, but was at a loss to explain why. The butler read the newspapers eagerly for weeks, but nothing else was ever published about the bizarre death of the blackmailer Rigby. Desmond thought it was poetic justice at first, the way the scheming, immoral blackmailer had died in her sleep from a nightmare, but he later realised that the real cause of Rigby’s death had been Lady Georgina herself.

Rumours of Charles Fontaine’s affair with the daughter of a surgeon named Ranston reached Lady Georgina’s ears in the winter of 1893. Charlotte Ranston was just eighteen, porcelain-skinned and beautiful. Charles Fontaine was 39 years her senior, hook-nosed, baldy, and plagued with rheumatism, but somehow managed to win the affections of young Charlotte, and he spent Wednesday and Saturdays with her at his pied-a-terre in Bath’s Queen Square. Charles had told Lady Georgina that he was working at his office on the two days he was spending at his love-nest with Charlotte.

Desmond the butler and the rest of the servants at the mansion of the Fontaines heard Charles and Georgina rowing one night, and Georgina accused her husband of adultery with Charlotte Ranston. Charles gave a false laugh and denied any involvement with the teenager, and Lady Georgina screamed at him and said she was going to see Miss Ranston for a confrontation. ‘Oh dear,’ remarked Desmond, listening on the stairs, and he imagined the Fontaine’s solicitor Francis Ingle and the Reverend Baylis – two old friends of Charles Fontaine - would soon be called in an attempt to sort this ‘problem’ out. The reverend and the solicitor had been called in twice before to deal with the deceitfulness of Charles Fontaine.

Desmond, the cook, the footman, and two maids heard a curious thing that night. In a frantic raised voice, Charles called for his wife to come back – as if she had left the bedroom, yet Lady Georgina had not passed any of them on the stairs. Moments later, Charles appeared in his night-robe on the landing. He gazed down at the household staff with a glazed lost look, then hurried back into his room and slammed the door. Desmond went up to the bedroom, and finding the door locked, he enquired if the master of the house was in need of his assistance, but Charles told him to go away.

That night, a terrifying apparition was seen at the house of the surgeon Thomas Ranston; the spectral form of a woman in a dark diaphanous flowing garment of some sort, hovering outside of his window. The face was deadly pale, as pallid as the faces of the corpses Ranston had dissected at post mortems. As he watched in horrified disbelief, the ghoul moved sideways, away from his window – towards the window of his daughter's room. Ranston bravely opened his window and looked out into the snow-flecked night. He saw only filaments of snow, and nothing else there, and so he decided the ghost he'd seen had been a product of his over-worked mind – until he heard a scream next door. It was Charlotte!

The surgeon rushed into his daughter's bedroom and hanging in the air over Charlotte's bed he saw the same ghastly phantasm he had seen outside his window not a minute before. The inhuman thing was descending on his screaming daughter, and Ranston instantly noticed the streaks of blood on Charlotte's face and the bloodstains on her nightgown. Charlotte fainted and fell face down into her pillow. Two of the surgeon's servants arrived on the scene, and they too saw the grotesque supernatural visitant flying around the room like some trapped giant white bird. The three men gasped in horror when the face of the demon turned towards them. Its visage was vaguely female, but the eyes were black and domed, and the mouth was twice the length of a normal mouth, with two rows of long white teeth. On the head of this monstrosity there were two wide triangular pink ears. One of the servant's ran off, and Thomas Ranston lunged perilously close to the flying female fiend and managed to drag the inert limp body of his unconscious daughter from her bed. As he pulled her off the bed, the imprint of her bloodied face was left in the soft white goosefeather pillow. Seconds later the servant who had ran away returned with a pistol and aimed it at the repulsive vision that was now sloping from the ceiling towards Thomas Ranston and his daughter. The servant fired the pistol four

times before the thing retreated and flew straight through the closed window and out into the snowy night. Somehow, the malevolent phantom had not even cracked a pane of glass in its passing out of the room. The window was thrown open and the two servants looked at the grey form of the nocturnal intruder flying into the distance over snow-covered rooftops until it was lost to sight in the swirling eddies of flakes.

A fortnight after this terrifying attack by the unidentified entity, Charlotte Ranston almost died from a typhoid-like fever. A week after that, she suffered from internal bleeding, and her physician expected her to die of septicaemia, but the teenager pulled through and eventually made a slow recovery from the mysterious illness. The servant who had fired upon the 'ghost' happened to be a relative of a servant named Jane Cowan in the Fontaine household, and when his story was repeated by Jane to Desmond the butler, he recalled how Charles Fontaine had pleaded for his wife not to leave upon that night when she threatened to go and confront Charlotte Ranston. This led Desmond to consider a shocking and apparently far-fetched possibility: was Lady Georgina Fontaine a vampiress? Desmond recalled the unexplained loss of blood in the blackmailer Mrs Rigby, and the injuries to Charlotte Ranston and her mystifying near-fatal illness. Desmond's grandmother had told him about a vampire who was said to have been at large in South Wales in 1846, and how the fiend had spread a whole host of infections by biting the throats of sleeping people at night and imbuing their blood. How though, if Lady Georgina was a vampire, could she endure daylight? Desmond pondered this question, for it was a commonly held belief that vampires were creatures of the night who loathed the light of day. Desmond recalled how Lady Georgina often used a parasol on the rare occasions when she visited the nearby park, and now, come to think of it, didn't she have the drapes of the windows arranged to admit a modicum of light? Desmond wondered if his line of thought was taking him into the realms of fantasy. Wasn't there one test he could carry out to see if his mistress was a female vampire? Now, was there a food that a vampire couldn't stomach? Yes! Of course – garlic. Desmond asked the cook Mrs Jones if she had ever used garlic as an ingredient in any of the dishes she had prepared for Charles and Georgina upstairs? 'It's more than I'd dare do,' answered Mrs Jones, 'as Lady Georgina cannot stomach it.'

Desmond felt the hairs on his neck rise up when the cook told him that. Was it mere coincidence? The bell below stairs rang, and Desmond changed

into his better coat and went up to the drawing room to see what the matter was. Lady Georgina had summoned Desmond, and she was alone in the drawing room. She kept eye-contact as she told him to ask the cook if she would be kind enough to make some more Garibaldi biscuits. Then she gave Desmond the shock of his life. ‘What made you mention garlic just now?’ she asked.

Desmond’s legs felt weak. How on earth could she have overheard what he had said down in the kitchen? Desmond did not know that vampires were reputed to have hypersensitive hearing, smell and vision. He was speechless. Could she read minds? He wondered.

‘Well?’ Lady Georgina glared at the man who had been her faithful servant for so many years. The anger in her dark eyes softened to sadness.

‘I cannot say ma’m – it was just a thought,’ said Desmond, avoiding her eyes.

‘You have served me for almost twenty years Desmond,’ said Lady Georgina in a solemn voice, ‘does that not count for anything?’

‘Of course ma’m, of course it does,’ Desmond replied, feeling an incredible urge to get out the house he’d regarded as his home. The hunch was overwhelming, and he suspected his life was in danger.

‘Come here,’ Lady Georgina commanded in a firm voice.

Desmond turned his back on her – something he would have regarded as unthinkable a day or two ago. He walked to the door, and Lady Fontaine snarled at him in an inhuman voice to come back. Desmond walked out the room and gracefully closed the door behind him in one swift movement. He walked down the stairs, his heart thumping, and he knew this would be the last time he would walk down those familiar stairs. With each step he felt invisible hands clawing at his back and a faint howling wind by his ears, but he began to say the Lord’s Prayer, and walked straight out of the house, not through the tradesmen’s door or the servant’s door, but by the front door. He walked straight into a church and felt the evil presence that had overshadowed him every step of the way suddenly cease as he entered the House of God. He told a bemused vicar about Lady Fontaine, and how she was some vampiric being hiding behind the façade of respectability, but the man of the cloth did not believe his story. Upon leaving the church, Desmond felt the evil presence at his side again, and so he walked to a catholic church and told a young priest the same tale as the one told to the Protestant vicar. This time the priest was open-minded, and he too had

heard about the entity that had attacked Charlotte Ranston and the unnatural death of Elizabeth Rigby from so-called ‘night terrors’. The priest invited the nervous old butler into his home, which was annexed to the church, and after a meal together, the holy man told him he could stay at the house until the matter was ‘dealt with’. The priest gathered all the things he would need to confront the thing that was masquerading as a woman; his rosary, the Holy Bible, a bottle of blessed water, and a crucifix. Desmond was worried about the young priest coming to serious harm, but the young man told him if the worst should come to the worst it would be what was known in the faith as “Baptism by Blood” – a shedding of one’s own blood for Christ in a final act of martyrdom. The priest set out for the Fontaines home at 7pm, and returned almost an hour later. He told Desmond that the vampiress had fled in her true form, resembling an enormous white bat with red eyes. The Holy water had scarred her face after being splashed upon her. The servants, who had heard the screams upstairs, had been completely unaware of the unusual situation, and had sent for the police. An inspector named Bence had been unable to establish just what crime had been committed, but had taken a statement anyway. Charles Fontaine would undoubtedly be in touch, the priest reasoned, and he wondered if that man knew what his wife was. As far as is known, Charles never did get in touch with the Catholic priest, and resumed his affair with Charlotte Ranston. Lady Georgina Fontaine was never heard from again, but no doubt the vampiress settled down for a while in the guise as some other beautiful woman.

Subterranean Vampires

Two and a half miles south-west of Durham the disused Brandon Colliery is located. It opened in 1856 and closed in 1968, and like, many a pit, was the scene of many tragic deaths, and many of those that died there were children, like pick-carrier Frank Love, who, on 31 October 1871, died tragically, aged just twelve. One summer evening in 1969, a woman from Meadowfield, a small village in County Durham, told a bemused constable that a man in black had attacked her, wrestled her to the floor, and had attempted to bite her neck. Fortunately the approach of a gang of children had startled him and the assailant got to his feet and ran off at an incredible speed. The children helped the woman up and told her that they had seen the same weird-looking man a few days back, running down the grassy embankment leading onto the railway tracks of Brandon Colliery Station. The father of one of the children had spied the same man in outdated black attire coming from the direction of Brandon Colliery a fortnight before. A rumour went round Meadowfield and beyond about a vampire being at large in the vicinity of the abandoned coal-pit. Several people claimed to have had encounters with the vampire, and quite a few of these reports described a red rash about the creature's mouth and a pair of long fanged incisors. The vampire reports lasted until the autumn, then the nights around Brandon Colliery were filled with an uneasy silence. Was it all just hysteria, or did one of the undead stalk the people of Meadowfield? There have been other reports of vampiristic entities prowling caverns, caves, quarries, coal and limestone pits around Britain. What better place for a vampire to have his or her lair than in a secluded light-free coalmine hundreds of feet below ground? The Hamstoke Vampire was said to live in such an ideal setting in the Goonzion Down mines of Bodmin Moor, Cornwall, in the early 19th century. Little is known about this vampire beyond the local tales of a shadowy hunched figure that roamed the moor after midnight, often at the time of a full moon, in search of vulnerable late-night travellers. Hamstoke, the parish after which the vampire is named, was, with the exception of Alternon, the largest parish in Cornwall. It was bounded by St Cleer, Alternon, Broadoak, Temple, Blisland and Warleggan, and on the moor in the vicinity of this this latter village, which, even today, is remote and atmospheric, an alleged vampire attack once took place. Around the year

1800, two girls in their teens who decided to leave their cottage in Warleggan one night to rendezvous with a gypsy boy. The girls, who were cousins, were named Elaina Jones and Mary Reddon, and they foolishly decided to walk three miles north of Warleggan onto the chilly moor. Elaina held a lantern to light the way, and upon this moonless stormy night, a strong wind blew out the lantern, and torrential rain hammered down on Bodmin Moor. The girls became disoriented and wandered far away from the place where they had agreed to meet the gypsy lad. A man came out of the darkness and persuaded the girls to accompany him to an old cottage, and once inside, they held onto one another in front of a roaring fire, shivering and unsure of the stranger's motives. He asked the girls to remove their clothes so he could dry them, but the teenagers declined and warmed themselves by the fire with the intent of drying their soaked clothes whilst wearing them. The man made a sudden grab at Elaina, and tore off her coat and bodice, but as he tried to bite her lower neck and shoulder, Mary grabbed the poker in the fire, and after pushing its glowing incandescent tip into his back, she clubbed the back of his head, but not as hard as she wanted, because she felt weakened with fear. Elaina managed to free herself from the attacker, and she and Mary ran into an adjacent room and managed to bolt the door. In this room, which served as a kitchen, they found an old woman dead on the floor. Her corpse reeked of a foul smell, and the dead woman had two prominent red puncture marks on her wrinkled neck. The man knocked heavily on the door but said nothing, and Elaina and Mary opened the window of the kitchen and darted off into the tempestuous night. They thought they could hear the unearthly attacker crying their names, but it was just the wind howling across the moors. By a miracle, Elaina reached her home and she and Mary fell down on the doorstep, exhausted, soaked to the bone, and in tears. Elaina's grandmother later told her grand-daughters that they had almost met their grisly fate at the hands of Brucker, the Hamstoke Fiend. He was a vampire who was thought to be the offspring of the Devil and a local trollop named Jane Williamson. Brucker lived in abandoned and waterlogged mines under Bodmin Moor. Some also said that he was in league with demonic sprite creatures known as Kobolds. In the 1900s, it is said that a schoolteacher from Launceston was enjoying a day out picnicking on Bodmin Moor with his sweetheart, when he decided to quote Oscar Wilde during a spectacular sunset. He proclaimed: 'Death must be so beautiful. To lie in the soft brown earth, with the grasses waving

above one's head, and listen to silence. To have no yesterday, and no tomorrow. To forget time, to forgive life, to be at peace!'

A sniggering sound was heard behind the couple, and the schoolteacher turned to see the shocking sight of an abnormally tall thin man in black with an unnaturally pale face and a head devoid of any hair. His eyes were dark slits and the strangers hands were large, with long fingers that tapered into pointed nails. The teacher and his fiancée got to their feet and the tall freak lunged at them. He clawed the face of the teacher and tore the arm of his shirt off as the woman ran off screaming. When the woman returned to the scene of the attack with a farmer and his son, they saw the teacher kneeling in the grass with blood streaming from his empty eye sockets. In the teacher's hand he held one of his own eyeballs that had been clawed out by the sinister attacker. The teacher's other hand searched the grass for the other eyeball, and upon seeing this, his sweetheart fainted. The teacher remained in shock for a while then also lost consciousness due to lack of blood and the severity of the pain. When the teacher was examined by a doctor, odd puncture marks, not made by normal human teeth, were found on the left forearm. The police searched for the wicked, violent culprit but he was never found, and the locals talked in hushed tones about the Hamstoke Vampire in the inns around Warleggan and St Neot. They say Garlic was sold in great quantities that year, and hawthorn crosses were hung on many a door to repel the feared vampire. Was the attacker merely a jealous rival of the teacher, or was he the (apparently ageless) Hamstoke Vampire? There is a curious epilogue to these tales of the Hamstoke bloodsucker. In 1931, a very unpopular and eccentric man of the cloth – the Reverend Densham – took on one of the most difficult incumbencies on record at St Bartholomew's Church in Warleggan – at the age of sixty-one. Densham alienated his congregation to such an extent with his idiosyncrasies he ended up topping the fence of his rectory with barbed-wire and allowed Alsatians to roam the grounds. The doors of St Bartholomew were opened only to a select few that Densham saw eye to eye with, and if these few parishioners were just a minute late for the service they would find the church doors bolted against them. A majority of the people forming the small congregation were farmers, yet Densham frowned on their carnivorous eating habits and declared vegetarianism as the civilized way to eat. In the end the congregation dwindled until just two people attended Densham's Mass, and then he even insulted those final

loyal churchgoers. A close friend pleaded with the harsh Rector to be less strict but he remained unrepentant of his Draconian methods, and remarked of the villagers of Warleggan: ‘They all come to me in the end as I conduct all the funerals. They won't come to church on their feet but they have to come in their black carriages.’

Incredibly, the deranged Reverend preached to his non-existent congregation and eventually resorted to placing life-size cardboard cut-outs of people in the pews! What’s more, after each pointless service he would write in the register book: ‘No fog, no wind, no rain, no congregation.’ The Reverend Densham refused to visit his flock in Warleggan, and in the 1950s, when rumours circulated about the local vampiric fiend being active again, several people wrote to Densham to tell him about the strange sightings of a ghoul. A shopkeeper in the village who delivered milk and food to the balmy Rector learned that the apparition had recently visited St Bartholomew’s Church during Densham’s sermon to his cardboard congregation, and the visitation had given the odd Reverend a nasty turn. Not long afterwards, the Reverend Densham was found dead on the stairs at the Rectory with a look of intense terror on his twisted face, and some conjectured that the “thing” had scared Densham to death. Despite Densham’s wishes to be buried within a specially created Garden of Remembrance in the Rectory, his body was instead cremated and the ashes sprinkled at a public park of remembrance at Plymouth.

Beneath Ingleborough Hill in the Yorkshire Dales National Park there exists a network of underground caves, discovered in 1923 by two amateur geologists named Long and Churchill. The ‘White Scar Caves’ as this network is called, have one of the largest cave chambers in Britain, and are now open to the public as a popular tourist attraction. Throughout the 1930s, an enormous dark-blue bat-like bird was seen to fly to and from the White Scar Caves mostly during the evenings, and this unidentified creature was thought by some of the locals to be a vampire bat. The bird’s wingspan was estimated to be some six feet or more, and the head of the strange and ominous ‘cryptid’ (as cryptozoologist’s term these unknown species) had pointed ears. In 1933, a man named John Bray kept a vigil in the caves for this sinister night-bird, and his long watches throughout one particular cold winter’s night paid off when the giant bat put in an appearance. Mr Bray saw that the bat looked like a human figure with huge wings, but only saw the creature in silhouette against a moonlit sky of snow-clouds. Bray

startled the apparently human-bird hybrid and it emitted a bloodcurdling shriek, raised its wings, then flew out of the cave at an incredible speed. John Bray held successive vigils, hoping for the bizarre creature to return, but it never did. Other people saw this 'birdman', including a policeman at Chapel-le-Dale Village. A similar giant bird with human features was reported between September 1968 and June 1970, mostly at sites located along the Bridgewater Canal at Preston Brook, and parts of Runcorn. At around 11pm one night in September 1968 two men on a barge on the Bridgewater Canal at Preston Brook saw an enormous dark bird with a wingspan of at least twelve feet descend from a clear starry sky and land with a thud on a barge moored about sixty feet away in a marina. The men were so afraid of the huge bird they hid in their canal boat and wouldn't come up until they heard the creature's wings flapping as it flew off into the night. The same oversized bird was seen during the following month over east Runcorn and Murdishaw, and several witnesses described the flying monstrosity as resembling a giant bat. These unidentified overgrown birds have been seen across the globe, and many theories have been expounded in an attempt to explain their existence. Some think they are pterosaurs, a type of prehistoric bird that did not die out millions of years ago when the other dinosaurs met their mysterious worldwide death. Others think that the creatures are merely unidentified species of bird, but that seems rather unlikely, and most ornithologists would scoff at this possibility. The coelacanth is a species of prehistoric fish that had supposedly been extinct since the Cretaceous Period (145 to 65 million years ago) until one was caught off the east coast of South Africa in 1938. Could a bird, believed to have been extinct for millions of years, be flying around today? It's highly unlikely, so what are we to make of these giant bat sightings? Are they from some parallel universe perhaps, or does the answer lie in the supernatural sphere? Are these monstrous creatures of the wing vampiric beings who have undergone some sinister metamorphosis to become bat-like humanoid entities? In the spring of 1922, an enormous black bat with a wingspan of six feet was seen circling the spire of West Drayton Church during the night of a full moon. Several terrified witnesses watched the creature dive into the churchyard, where it roamed among the gravestones. When it was chased by two policemen, the creature let out a loud bloodcurdling screech, flapped its wings, and soared skywards. An old man who claimed he had seen the giant bat twenty-five years previously, maintained that it was the spirit of a

vampire who had murdered a woman to drink her blood in Harmondsworth in the 1890s. In Thornton Heath, Surrey, in 1938, a woman reported being attacked in the night on three occasions by a large winged creature with fangs. Each time it flew into her bedroom and drew blood from her neck, leaving her weak with fear. One night in November 1963, four teenagers were walking along a country road near Hythe in Kent when they saw something very strange; a tall figure of a man in black, minus a head, with 'bat wings' sprouting from his back, approached them on foot. The teenagers ran off in fright. This entity is remarkably similar to the so-called "Mothman" who haunted West Virginia in the United States in 1966. Like the Kent entity, Mothman did not seem to have a head, but two luminous red eyes set into its chest, and it also had wings that were described as looking like those of a bat. The creature was seen by many people and to this day, Mothman remains a mystery. The "Cornish Owlman" – a humanoid entity with wings and large red owl-like eyes – was seen in Cornwall between 1976 and 1978, and although encounters with the creature were reported in the press, the authorities didn't even bother to investigate.

We all undergo metamorphosis, or bodily change, day by day, as we age, but the concept of shape-shifting in vampires predates Bram Stoker's fictional Dracula changing into a bat. Vampires were not only thought to be able to take the form of a bat, but the form of many animals, including dogs and wolves through a type of 'transfiguration'. The most famous transfiguration is the one that takes place when the face of Jesus becomes as radiant as the sun and his robes become as white as snow upon Mount Thabor. This transformation, referred to as 'metemorphothe' by St Matthew and St Mark, has also allegedly been observed in several mediums throughout history. Queenie Nixon, a Northampton-born medium, gave many demonstrations of astonishing physical mediumship from the 1950s to the 1980s in which her face would change into that of a stranger. Sitters at Queenie's demonstrations would become aware of a gaseous substance similar to cigarette smoke that would swirl around the medium's face. This would be followed by the gradual materialisation of pale 'masks' on Queenie Nixon's face, and within minutes the face of the medium would become the face of a girl, or an old man, sometimes sporting a moustache or beard. This phenomenon is usually explained by mediums in terms of ectoplasm and trance states, but scientists are sceptical of such claims.

Could the vampire be capable of such metamorphosis, in which he or she turns into a bat-like creature? It's certainly food for thought.

Most of Lancashire is undermined by coal-pits, and many of them are disused. It is said that in the Wigan area, many of the disused collieries are haunted. Considering the loss of life that was common down the coal mines in the 19th and 20th centuries, this is not surprising, but one particular 'haunting' is of interest because it involved the apparition of the archetypal Dracula type of vampire. The case was reported by a Preston journalist named William Topping around 1919, and was also investigated by a trio of amateur vampire hunters. These three brave real-life Van Helsings were a bookseller from Workington, Cumberland, named Jonathan Carmichael, a photographer named John Warwick of Carlisle, and a soldier named James Dunne, who hailed from Bolton. In 1897 at an unnamed colliery near to Wigan, miners, upon reaching the bottom of the mine, had to walk for almost half an hour to reach the coal face, and one evening there was a commotion at the colliery because a very strange-looking man had been seen prowling about at a considerable depth. The out-of-place stranger was said to be over six feet in height, to have black slicked-back hair, and an aristocratic face. He wore a long opera cloak, a suit of dark green velvet, and wore a dazzling collection of gold and silver rings encrusted with a variety of gemstones. He had an unnerving habit of literally appearing out of thin air, and on one occasion he ascended from the pit in a cage with two terrified miners. During the journey to the surface he spoke in a foreign language – possibly French – and when he walked out into the night air he immediately turned into a huge bat and flew off into the ink-black sky. The weird foreigner was seen five times in all, and on the last occasion the vampire 'hunters' Carmichael, Warwick and Dunne, who had heard about the strange shape-shifting nobleman from a relative of a miner at the pit, decided it was time for a showdown. They descended on the colliery and were given permission to track down the suspected bloodsucker. The cloaked stranger was spotted sneaking about in the darkness by a collier who raised the alarm, and the vampire hunters soon gave chase, but unfortunately the intrepid threesome were forced back when their quarry retreated down an old tunnel deemed unsafe because of a number of recent cave-ins. That tunnel ran for a quarter of a mile to yet another pit, and it was said that the mystifying oddly-dressed Frenchman haunted that pit for a while until there was a cave-in. A body was recovered from the falling-in of

a roof but the corpse was not that of the suspected vampire, but that of a young miner.

What must rate as the most bizarre underground vampires were said to have been encountered on many occasions in the tunnels under Billinge, which lies about five miles south-west of Wigan. This area has a hill - known locally as the “Lump” – the crown of which looks down from 600 feet above sea level onto sixteen counties. One can also see Ireland, Scotland, the Welsh Hills, and other areas of Britain and beyond from this breathtaking vantage point, but there are lesser-known places of interest beneath the bedrock around Billinge, and a case in point is the unidentified church that sunk into the earth at some time in the past. In the late 18th century, four local children decided to go and explore the limestone caverns in the area and vanished. One of the children, a 9-year-old named Will, eventually resurfaced and revealed the terrifying and gruesome fate of his three friends. A group of old men in beards and black and green velvet clothes grabbed the children and one of the men started to bite the neck of the youngest, a boy of five. As his screams echoed throughout the cave, Will managed to run off. He was pursued by three of the bizarrely-dressed old men, but managed to outrun them. At one point, Will stumbled over human bones in a torch-lit chamber, and the discovery frightened him so much, he tried to desperately squeeze through a hole in the cave towards the daylight. As he was almost out of the cave, a hand grabbed his foot and began to pull him back. Will kicked back with this foot and hit the person apprehending him in the face. The boy’s foot was released and he ran off yelling for help.

The authorities were concerned because a number of people had gone missing in the area near the cave entrances. Two heavily armed soldiers (possibly Dragoons) descended into the caverns with torches and claimed that they not only found a heap of human bones, they also found the ruins of an ancient church of some unknown denomination. The interior of the church was lit by three large candles and grotesque gargoyles formed part of an altar. Throughout the exploration of the underground, the soldiers said they felt as if they were being watched, and also heard voices speaking in an unknown language. One report said that a child's head was found in a cave, and also several stone jugs containing blood. Believing this was evidence of cannibalism. Gunpowder was used to seal the caves, and so the riddle of the underground church of Billinge remains unsolved. Sunken

churches are to be found not only in Lancashire, but in many corners of the UK. In Lincolnshire, for example, you will find the story of the sunken church of Sancliff in which the whole church and its congregation of habitual sinners were swallowed up by the earth. Then there is the legend of Kirkstanton Chapel, which sank into the ground along with its priest and worshippers. Some modern folklorists believe an earthquake was to blame for the 'sinking' of the church. At Fisherty Brow, near Kirkby Lonsdale, Westmorland, a legend has been told for centuries about a church that vanished into the ground with its parson and his congregation. From time to time, phantom bells have been heard at the spot where the church slid into the clay, and many people, upon putting an ear to the ground, have heard the faint ringing of church bells.

Vampires are said to detest daylight and particularly sunlight, and I sometimes wonder if some of the 19th century's great eccentrics were in fact, vampiric beings. Take the Fifth Duke of Portland, William John Cavendish Bentinck Scott (1800-1879) who had an extensive subterranean complex excavated under his estate at Welbeck Abbey in North Nottinghamshire that included eight tunnels covering a distance of fifteen miles, an underground ballroom occupying ten-thousand square feet, for two thousand dancers, a billiards room for twelve full-size billiards tables, and even an underground library. All of these rooms were lit by hundreds of gas-jets and painted in a specific shade of pink that was agreeable with the Duke's eyes. The Duke detested sunlight, and his favourite time was from sunset to sunrise, in fact he had a sunset scene painted on the ceiling of his huge ballroom. When he had to travel during the day, the Duke made his journeys in a black hearse-like carriage with shuttered windows so no light could touch his skin. Direct verbal communication with other people was forbidden by the Duke, and even when he was ill, the doctor was not allowed to see him, but instead had to instruct the valet to take the Duke's pulse from behind a door. Rumours naturally abounded about the 5th Duke of Portland; some said he was disfigured, or had a gruesome-looking skin disease, but a rare photograph he had taken of himself at the time of his self-imposed isolation shows him to be a pallid man with bushy side-whiskers and dark shrewd-looking eyes. Still the rumours flew about the Duke: he obviously had wild orgies going on in his underground lair, for why would a reclusive lonely man want a ballroom for two thousand dancers? Other people thought he had made some pact with the Devil, for

why did the Duke only walk in the grounds of Welbeck Abbey in the dead of night? And what of the Duke's bizarre taste in food? All he ate each day was a freshly killed chicken. In 1879 the Duke died and was buried at Kensal Green Cemetery in North London. Not long after the burial, strange rumours circulated about the Duke. Some believed he had been leading a double life at Welbeck Abbey, and this intriguing rumour had its origins in the extraordinary claims made by a widow of Baker Street, London, named Anna Maria Druce. Mrs Druce asserted that the late Duke had been her husband Thomas Charles Druce, shop-owner of a popular store called the Bake Street Bazaar. Thomas Druce had died in 1864 but Mrs Druce claimed the burial had been bogus, as the coffin had been filled with lead. This had been staged by the Duke because he had tired of his alter ego, Thomas Druce, and had wanted to return to his reclusive life at Welbeck Abbey. Thomas Druce's grave in Highgate Cemetery was opened, and it did not contain lead at all, it contained the bearded decomposing corpse of Mr Druce. The case brought to court by the scheming Mrs Druce collapsed. That is not the end of the matter though, for months after the 5th Duke of Portland was laid to 'rest' his ghost was seen prowling Kensal Green Cemetery. This ghost wore a long black cloak and a dark green velvet suit. Was this merely the phantom of the Duke? Or was the man who went out of his way to avoid daylight a vampire? We may know more one day.

Strange Slayings

In November 2001, Mabel Leyshon, a lovely old lady of 90 years of age, was stabbed to death at her home in Llanfairpwll on Anglesey. Her killer was a 17-year-old named Mathew Hardman – Mrs Leyshon's former newspaper delivery boy - and this youth not only stabbed the deaf pensioner twenty-two times, he also mutilated her body and placed two pokers at her feet in the shape of a cross. The dead woman's excised heart was found next to her body wrapped in newspaper in a saucepan. Of this macabre ritualistic crime, sickened policeman Detective Superintendent Alan Jones told reporters: 'The injuries are the worst I've seen in my career.' The police subsequently discovered that the teenaged killer had drunk some of the blood of his elderly victim in an effort to acquire immortality. Before Mr Justice Richards ordered that Hardman should be detained at Her Majesty's pleasure (a life sentence), the prosecution told how the accused had been obsessed with vampires and the darker side of the Occult, and how, two months before the horrific murder, Hardman had accused a 16-year-old German exchange student of being a vampire. He tried to persuade the girl to bite his neck so he could also become a vampire, and when she refused, Hardman allegedly forced his neck against her mouth and the student had to shout for help.

Hardman denied that he was obsessed with vampires and claimed his curiosity regarding the nocturnal bloodsuckers was merely a "subtle interest".

Justice Richards told Hardman that the attack on Mrs Leyshon had been planned and carefully calculated, then told him, "Why you, an otherwise pleasant and otherwise well regarded young man, should act in this way is difficult to comprehend. You had hoped for immortality. All you achieved was to brutally end another person's life and the bringing of a life sentence upon yourself."

The jury took four hours to reach a verdict in a trial which was so graphically gruesome, journalist had great difficulty reporting the gory details of the case. When the verdict was announced, Hardman wept in the dock at Mold Crown Court and his mother screamed. What had driven a seemingly normal teenager to smash his way into a pensioner's home to stab her twenty-two times before slicing open her chest to pull out her

heart? Hardman had, in the words of the prosecution, believed in vampires, but this was not a unique case. In his book, *The Anatomy of Crime*, the celebrated Superintendent Robert Fabian of Scotland Yard, one of the most hard-boiled logical and scientific detectives in the history of criminology, wrote a curious paragraph about one particular murder case that he never solved:

I advise anybody who is tempted at any time to venture into Black Magic, witchcraft, Shamanism - call it what you will - to remember Charles Walton and to think of his death, which was clearly the ghastly climax of a pagan rite. There is no stronger argument for keeping as far away as possible from the villains with their swords, incense and mumbo-jumbo. It is prudence on which your future peace of mind and even your life could depend.

In his warning to the idly curious, Fabian was referring to the baffling case of the 'Pitchfork Murder', which occurred in 1945 in the village of Lower Quinton, just a few miles south of Stratford-upon-Avon. Before we look into the murder mystery, we must go back in time to 1662 to understand why the area around the scene of the crime is steeped in witchcraft.

In the spring of 1662, a Scottish witch named Isobel Gowdie was burned at the stake for using a team of harnessed toads to pull a miniature plough across a field. In Celtic mythology, the toad had always been associated with witchcraft, sorcery and curses and blights, and this symbolism was carried on into Christianity. In Greek lore, Amerindian legend, and even Chinese mythology, the toad was also regarded as a magical creature identified with the powers of darkness, so nobody in 17th century Scotland thought it was strange to put an old woman to death for employing toads to pull a toy plough. Throughout the rest of Britain, the toad was a much-maligned yet respected creature. In the English Fens, for example, a peculiar Roman tradition is still extant there; the practice of using a toad as a compass. This custom dates back to the days when the occupying Romans would lay a dagger on a toad's back, then watch the creature move around slowly until it stopped when the dagger pointed due north.

Over two centuries after the execution of Isobel Gowdie, another old woman who was suspected of being a witch was also put to death. She was 75-year-old Ann Tenant of Long Compton in Warwickshire, and the man

who slayed her was a mentally retarded youth named John Heywood, referred to locally as the village idiot. Heywood was convinced that Miss Tenant was a member of a coven of witches who held their sabbats in the countryside around the village of Long Compton. Some said the old woman also used toads to blight crops by black magic rituals. At the murder trial, Heywood confessed, "Her was a proper witch. I pinned her to the ground [with a pitchfork] before slashing her throat with a bill-hook to carve a cross." Local gossip at the time of the trial had it that Long Compton was becoming the epicentre of witchcraft in the region, and an old saying of the day was: "There are enough witches in Long Compton to draw a wagonload of hay up Long Compton Hill." Strangely enough, just south of this village stands a circle of Neolithic or Bronze Age stones, known as the Rollright Stones which have been associated with pagan rituals for centuries. Even today, modern witches and occultists still gather within the circle of stones to conduct esoteric rites.

About 15 miles north of the Rollright Stones, the picturesque village of Lower Quinton sits in the shadow of Meon Hill. Even today, Lower Quinton has a spooky aura about it after dark, and is surrounded by eerily-named places such as Devil's Elbow and Upper Slaughter. In a thatched cottage at Lower Quinton in the 1940s, there lived a 74-year-old man named Charles Walton, and his unmarried niece, Edith. In his younger days, Walton had worked as a ploughman, but now in old age he was plagued with stabbing rheumatism, and eked out a living putting in a seven-hour day for one shilling and sixpence an hour hedge-cutting for local farmers. He was a familiar figure in the village with his double-pronged hay-fork over his shoulder and his slash-hook in his hand, always hobbling to work up Meon Hill. Outwardly there was nothing to suggest that the old hedger and ditcher was anybody out of the ordinary, but Walton had quite a sinister reputation in the village, where it was common knowledge that he bred huge toads and was once a legendary horse whisperer. Horse whispering is an ancient, and now largely forgotten art of being able to control a horse from a distance without any word or command, but with a slight gesture of the hand to make the horse stay, run, canter or gallop. Walton's horse whispering ability seemed nothing short of witchcraft, as his power over animals allegedly extended to cattle, toads and birds. What's more, it was said that Walton had been seen on many occasions imitating the songs of the nightingale and chirping to other species of bird. He openly professed to

be conversant in the aeolian language of his feathered friends, for they seemed to obey his requests to refrain from eating the seeds sown in the fields of his little plot.

On the morning of 14 February 1945, Charles Walton left home and hobbled up Meon Hill to attend to the hedges that formed the border of Alfred Potter's farm, about a mile from Walton's cottage.

At six o'clock that evening, Edith began to worry about her uncle. He still hadn't returned, and he was usually back before four o'clock. She felt something had happened to him, and suspected that the old man had collapsed, as he'd recently been complaining about the unbearable rheumatic pain that was crippling his legs. Edith sought out her neighbour Harry Beasley, and they both hiked up Meon's Hill to Potter's farm - known as 'The Firs' - with a mounting sense of trepidation.

Farmer Potter told Edith and Harry that he had seen someone in the distance earlier in the day who appeared to be cutting hedges, and had assumed it had been Walton. However, Potter thought that Walton had long gone home. He fetched a flashlight and took Walton's niece and her neighbour over the fields to the spot where the old man had last been seen.

The spotlight of the torch revealed the whole horrific scene. Under a willow tree on Meon Hill was the spread-eagled body of Charles Walton. Potter glanced at the corpse then shielded Edith from the gruesome sight with his arm and took her home. He then summoned the police. Meanwhile, back at the scene of the crime, Harry Beasley stood guard over his murdered neighbour. He saw that Walton had been impaled with his own pitch fork. The twin prongs of the tool had been driven through his neck with such force, they penetrated the ground to a depth of six inches. Crosses had been carved on the cheeks, neck and abdomen, and the bill-hook that had been used to cut out the symbols was still wedged between Walton's ribs. Near to the body lay the old man's walking stick, covered in blood, because it had been used to bludgeon his head. The face of Walton was frozen in an expression of sheer terror.

The Warwickshire police force reacted strangely to the crime. They seemed to be reluctant to investigate, and called for a murder squad from Scotland Yard to look into the strange killing. On the following day, Detective Superintendent Robert Fabian and his assistant, Detective Sergeant Albert Webb turned up at the village and they were greeted with what appeared to be a conspiracy of silence. The few locals who did speak

merely told Fabian that Walton had been a secretive, strange old man who bred large natterjack toads in the damp undergrowth of his garden. Fabian also learned that Walton had never been over-fond of company, and had bought his cider by the gallon from pubs and preferred to drink it alone by his kitchen fireside. Fabian could not allow his reasoning to be clouded by superstition, yet he felt that Walton had been ritually murdered, so he took the unprecedented steps of consulting Dr Margaret Murray, a witchcraft and vampire expert, and delved into the local history of the area. He was intrigued to uncover a record of the 1875 murder of Ann Tenant, who had practically been killed in the same manner as Charles Walton. Fabian began to suspect that the person or persons who had killed Walton had carried out the murder in order to purge the village of a man who had been regarded as a practising witch.

The line of inquiry switched to the prisoner of war camp over at Long Marston, where Italian, Germans and Slavonic soldiers were quizzed, but Fabian was confident that the POWs were innocent of Walton's murder.

Then something weird happened. A black dog was found hanged on Meon Hill. There were hushed claims in the village that the hound had been Walton's 'familiar' - a demon in disguise. Even the secular-minded Fabian was unnerved by the hanged dog, for on the first day of the murder investigation he had climbed Meon Hill to examine the crime scene, and had been intrigued to notice a large black retriever that was seated on a nearby wall, watching him. Seconds afterwards, when a boy walked past, Fabian asked, "Are you looking for your dog?"

The boy returned a blank stare and said "What dog?"

Fabian suddenly noticed that the dog had vanished, and the boy, who had obviously been raised by superstitious parents, fled down the hill in absolute terror. He later told the villagers that Fabian had seen the infamous ghostly black dog, which was regarded as a portent of death or bad luck.

Shortly after the hanged dog was cut down from the tree, another dog was run over by a police car, and there was a spate of inexplicable canine deaths during the murder investigation. As if to underline the relevance of the canine coincidences, Fabian's attention was drawn to a curious passage from an old yellowed book entitled Folklore, Old Customs and Superstitions in Shakespeare Land, which was written in 1930. The text of the passage actually referred to the young Charles Walton:

At Alveston a plough named Charles Walton met a dog on his way home nine times in successive evenings. He told both the shepherd and the carter with whom he worked, and was laughed at for his pains. On the ninth encounter a headless lady rushed past him in a silk dress, and on the next day he heard of his sister's death.

Fabian and Webb learned from several of the more talkative villagers that in early spring 1944, crops had been slow in growing, and there were several fatal accidents with livestock. The harvest was a disaster and even the beer had been unaccountably sour in every local pub. Many thought the source of the widespread bad luck was Walton, so Fabian easily deduced that the old man had been slayed to put an end to his evil magical influences. That person or persons had probably had an intimate knowledge of the occult and planned the murder months in advance. Fabian knew that the date of Walton's death - 14 February - was Valentine's Day, and occasionally Ash Wednesday, but that particular date also had a special relevance to the ancient Druids - they carried out human sacrifices on that day to procure a good harvest.

Fabian of the Yard finally had to concede. Four thousand statements had been taken and painstakingly cross-referenced; twenty-nine samples of blood, skin, and hair were analysed, but to no avail, and the silence in the village was impenetrable to the London policemen. Fabian and Webb reluctantly retreated to the capital, where more mundane crimes demanded their attention. For many years afterwards, Robert Fabian returned to Lower Quinton on the anniversary of the Walton killing and hid himself on Meon Hill to keep a watch on the area, perhaps hoping that the murderer would return to the scene of the crime, but no one ever did. Speaking of the Walton murder to a newspaper in 1976, the then retired Fabian told a reporter: "Detectives deal in facts, but I must admit there was something uncanny about that investigation."

Was Walton a witch, or even a vampire, as some have suggested? It’s difficult to say after all this time. There is undoubtedly a ritualistic aspect to the slaying, and the ulterior motive seems to lie somewhere in the occult sphere. Someone reading this book may know the truth, and he or she may prefer to keep that skeleton in the cupboard. In the county of Warwickshire where Walton was murdered, there is an old mid-19th century tale about three men who tracked a vicious murderous vampire and tortured it in an effort to get the sadistic bloodthirsty fiend to reveal the whereabouts of its

lair, where others of its kind lived. At a secluded place where the River Avon was edged with willows, the vampire – formally a doctor named Paxton – was shot through the head with a crossbow bolt of hawthorn, a wood traditionally used to combat such creatures of the night. Paxton refused to die and attempted to escape the trio of vampire hunters – Matthias Green, Jim Sherring, and a librarian from Stratford named Bindley, who was something of an expert on vampirology. Bindley knew that vampires abhorred water, and so, as Paxton backed away towards the banks of the Avon, the librarian knew the creature was trapped. Matthias Green, a mercenary in the pay of a local committee of farmers, unleashed more bolts from his crossbow and hit the vampire squarely in the chest and neck. The creature howled in agony and slid into the river, where it was lost to sight at one point in the low night mists on the waters. Jim Sherring, a local poacher, dragged the incapacitated vampire out the river and he and Green hanged him from the branch of a tree. By the light of the full moon the three men tried to interrogate the vile fanged freak as to the whereabouts of its lair, but the vampire hissed, spat at them, attempted to claw their faces with his long nails, and emitted spine-chilling shrieks. Bindley directed the mercenary to carry out one of the most horrific acts of torture known to man – the Blood Eagle. This barbaric stomach-churning atrocity was carried out on such historical personages as King Ella of Northumbria in March 867 AD, King Edmund, and King Maelgualai of Munster. Matthias Green slashed open the back of vampire Paxton from the nape of his neck to his buttocks, then calmly pulled open the long gash to reveal the spine of the nocturnal parasite. The vampire screamed for mercy, and a second vampire appeared from behind a tree some three hundred yards away. With blood-slicked hands Matthias loaded a hawthorn bolt into his crossbow and fired it at Paxton's confederate but the shadowy figure darted away. The mercenary then took a broad-bladed knife and detached the ribs of the hanged but conscious vampire and opened the rib cages so that they resembled the bloodstained wings from which this heinous act derives its name. The vampire squealed and went into convulsions. The poacher Sherring gloated at the death throes of the vampire, while Bindley grimaced as Mr Green pulled out the lungs of the humanoid leech. The vampire made a loud rasping sound before the soldier of fortune decided to show a modicum of compassion by hammering a wooden steak through its heart. The corpse of the vampire was finally dismembered and put on a fire which

burned until the dawn. The location of its lair was never discovered and Paxton's bloodlusting brothers were never captured and destroyed. They allegedly prowled Warwickshire for many years. Bindley the vampire specialist was said to have been killed by a vampiric entity near Aconbury, a small village in Herefordshire. This supposedly took place at midnight on Twelfth Night, when the shocking outline of a man formed in blue smoke that had drifted up from a bubbling well. Bindley rummaged about in his knapsack for a crucifix to repel the partially materialised form of what appeared to be a monk in a cowl. Bindley's assistant, a fourteen-year-old boy named Wilson, ran off at this point, and when he returned he found the librarian dead with an appalling wound to his neck. The body contained not a single drop of blood. The vampire is said to haunt Aconbury churchyard to this day, and it has been seen lingering close to the tomb of Roger de Clifford for some unknown reason.

The Vampire Stalkers

On 9 March 1967 a rather unusual message appeared in the Personal Column of *The Times* newspaper which read: "A witch of full powers is urgently sought to lift a 73-year-old curse and help restore the family fortunes of an afflicted nobleman. Employment genuinely offered."

The afflicted nobleman was the Duke of Leinster, a seventy-four-year-old bankrupt man who had experienced a dreadfully long run of bad luck in both his personal life and financial career. The ageing aristocrat believed his continual misfortune was the product of an old curse that had run in his family for seventy-four years. A "witch of full powers" duly responded to the Duke's printed plea for help and eventually 'lifted' the curse. The duke found himself solvent again, and was able to re-enter high society.

Stranger messages have appeared in the personal columns of newspapers, both national and local, and one such message no doubt caught the attention of thousands of readers in the late summer of 1971. The peculiar eye-catching invitation appeared in a Birmingham newspaper first, before being printed in the Daily Mirror a week afterwards, and it stated: "Do you have an open mind towards the supernatural? Do you have the courage to investigate ghosts and the uncanny? Good pay for the right people. Interested parties should send an SAE to Mr W. Naismith, Lansdowne House, Berkeley Square, London W1X 6AA."

One of the first people to respond to this intriguing advertisement was a 21-year-old Birmingham man named Barry Cody. Unemployed and bored, he'd been trawling the Situations Vacant pages of his local newspaper, and had been considering a career as cadet in the Royal Navy, for which he would receive the then princely sum of £21 per week, but now his attention had been grabbed by the mysterious Mr Naismith's invitation to chase ghosts and ghouls. Barry had become interested in the occult since the age of fifteen, and so he sent a self-addressed envelope to Naismith's address in London, and received an A4-sized piece of paper outlining the work involved in Mr William Naismith's Supernatural Investigations Bureau. The pay was £30 per week, but there were a few catches. The successful applicant would have to relocate to Berkeley Square in the very desirable district of London's Mayfair, but the hours of the job were irregular by their very nature, as ghosts and other supernatural entities do not limit their

paranormal activities to a 9 to 5 shift. All the same, Barry went for an interview at Berkeley Square and was questioned by 72-year-old Mr Naismith – who was wheelchair-bound – for almost an hour. Five days afterwards the young man received exciting news by post at his Birmingham home: he was to start work on Wednesday 29 September at 9am. Barry and two other successful applicants to the offbeat advertisement – 32-year-old Liz Brookes of Nottingham, and 45-year-old Charles Wickham of Bury St Edmunds, met at the anteroom of William Naismith's impressive London residence. An elderly female secretary ushered the trio into a cosy study with carved oak-panelled walls, a grand marble fireplace, and a long stained-glass window featuring a Latin motto - "Scientia deleo Vereor" ("Knowledge erases fear"). The three trainee investigators were served coffee, and in this informal atmosphere Mr Naismith talked to them about the areas of his research: ghosts, sensory-deprivation, psychometry, doppelgangers, dimensions, and vampires. Every subject of the paranormal Naismith discussed perfunctorily seemed to have some element of credibility, but the topic of vampires seemed out of place and rather dated to the mind of Barry Cody, and he expressed his scepticism to his new employer. Naismith put on a pair of bifocals, retrieved a slim folder from a pile of papers on his desk, opened it, and read out a letter from a 38-year-old Hounslow woman named Mrs Miller, who believed she was being haunted by what she called a 'biting poltergeist'. For three months, between 10 January and 12 March 1971, Mrs Miller had been awakened in the night with alarming sensations of being bitten on the neck, breasts and thighs. On two occasions, the unseen biter broke the skin of the woman's neck and drew blood. In the end, Mrs Miller had left her flat in the middle of the night after seeing the vaporous outline of a man standing over her bed. William Naismith had investigated Mrs Miller's flat, as well as the flat below hers, which had lain vacant for some time, apparently because it had a reputation for being haunted by a man in black. This ghost had been active in the flat since the 1920s, according to several old people living next door to the haunted property. Mr Naismith was a man of considerable wealth, and he rented both flats for three months, hoping to confront the vampiric entity that had terrified Mrs Miller. Almost a week into his vigil, Naismith had encountered the materialisation of a man in late Victorian attire by candlelight in the downstairs flat at 11.50 pm. Suspecting the ghost was in fact a vampire, Naismith wore a rosary with silver crucifix, carried a

phial of holy water, a leather-bound copy of the Holy Bible, several cloves of garlic, and a long stake of hawthorne wood. In addition to these items, Naismith had at his disposal a special torch fitted with filaments that gave off ultraviolet light to simulate sunlight – something which was thought to vaporise the skin of a vampire. Naismith never had a chance to test out this novel flashlight when the suspected vampire materialised, then attacked him with lightning agility. It began to throttle the elderly investigator, but upon seeing the rosary beads and crucifix around his neck, it threw him down onto a sofa and ran towards the empty dark mouth of the fireplace and vanished, leaving a musky smell in its wake. Naismith, an angina sufferer, took his heart pill and gradually recovered from the incredible attack. He was, unfortunately, unable to continue the vigil after his health deteriorated and he ended up confined to a wheelchair. He returned to Berkeley Square and spent days trying to trace a good medium. He found one through the recommendation of a friend, and she was Mrs Ivy Jones of Camden Town. Ivy was taken to the haunted flats in Hounslow during the daytime, and she received distinct impressions of a paradoxical, contradictory nature. She saw an angelic-faced reverend of long ago delivering a sermon from his pulpit, and believed he had a surname which sounded like Layton, but this same man had indulged in bestiality and orgies, and had cannibalistic urges. He had ‘interfered’ with several bodies lying in some sort of chapel of rest, and on one occasion he had even resorted to exhuming the body of a woman so he could cut out her heart out and eat it roasted. The medium became so distressed as she tuned into this despicable Victorian clergyman, she almost fainted, and had to be taken outside by Naismith to gulp fresh air. Mrs Jones warned Naismith to ‘leave the flats well alone, because he’s evil, and now he has chosen to walk the darkness, because if he goes across he’ll go straight to Hell.’

The medium refused to offer any further help, but Naismith was determined to get to lay the vampire.

Barry Cody still rejected the idea that vampires existed, and so, Naismith laid down a challenge: ‘If you don’t believe in vampires, I dare you to stay in the haunted flats for a week. What do you say?’

Barry secretly feared he would meet something inhuman but did not want to seem a coward in front of his co-investigators, Liz Brookes and Charles Wickham, so he accepted the challenge. Naismith gave Barry a

crash-course in vampire-slaughtering, and warned him that he should never, under any circumstance fall for the deceptions of a vampire. In a stern voice the old man said: ‘They often pretend they are human in reality, and will beg you to spare their lives. Some use hypnosis to gain the upper hand, so avoid eye contact. Kill and ask questions later.’

On the last day of September, Barry Cody arrived at the house that had been divided into two flats. From the moment the taxi left him at the front door of the Victorian dwelling, he had the feeling he was being watched. He settled down in the ground-floor flat and instead of burning candles as Mr Naismith had suggested, Barry switched on the lights in the kitchen, bedroom, hall and lounge. Every hour or so he’d go gingerly upstairs to the upstairs flat with the ultraviolet torch in one hand and a Bible in the other and make a cursory inspection of the rooms. The first night passed without incident, and around 2.40 am, Barry fell into an uneasy sleep as he listened to his transistor radio. On the following evening at 8.30pm, Barry heard a noise in the kitchen, and when he went to investigate, he saw a boy of about nine or ten years of age opening the window over the sink. The boy climbed into the kitchen and was startled to see Barry standing in the doorway leading to the hall. ‘What’s your game lad?’ Barry asked the junior intruder.

The boy continued to gaze in astonishment at the investigator of the unknown for a moment, then stammered out a reply. ‘I – I’m looking for my brother Jim,’ he said nervously.

‘Well he isn’t here, so beat it,’ Barry told him, waving him away with the unlit ultraviolet torch.

‘Why are you here?’ the boy stood in the stone sink, looking Barry up and down. He seemed less nervous now.

‘Never you mind, now get out of here before I go and call the police,’ said Barry, and all of a sudden a bizarre thought entered his head: *Could this child be something inhuman in disguise?*

The young trespasser seemed fixated with the adapted torch Barry held, and his eyes had a wisdom that seemed far in advance of his years.

Barry switched on the ultraviolet torch and aimed its beam at the boy and he let out a scream as his face instantly turned dark red. He held out his small pale hands to shield his eyes from the scorching beam of synthetic sunlight, and they too turned dark with small black blisters. The ‘boy’ turned away from Barry, dived straight through the open window into the darkness of the yard and ran off squealing. Barry stood there in shock for a

moment, then decided enough was enough. He abandoned his vigil, leaving some of the equipment behind, and headed back to the Supernatural Investigations Bureau in Berkeley Square. Mr Naismith was initially furious at Barry for his 'dereliction of duty' but later sympathised with the young man for the way he had reacted to something terrifying that was outside of most people's everyday experience. The second vigil at the haunted flats took place three days later, and on this occasion, Liz Brookes joined Barry Cody. At 10.45pm on the first night of the 'vampire watch' Barry and Liz heard footsteps in the upstairs flat, and went to investigate in an understandably nervous state. They checked the lounge first, and found nothing amiss there, then proceeded to the bedroom, where a strange sweet smell, possibly lavender, was evident. An old wardrobe stood in the corner, and Liz glanced at this, then turned towards the bedroom door, pulling Barry by his elbow after her. 'What's wrong?' Barry asked, instinctively knowing something had spooked his colleague. Not until she reached she had entered the downstairs flat did she reveal what had chilled her. When she had glanced at the wardrobe in the bedroom of the upstairs flat, Liz had noticed the wardrobe door had been slightly ajar, and two grey-looking fingers had been slightly protruding from the gap in the door – as if someone had been inside the wardrobe, keeping the door closed over with their first and second fingers. After Liz related this, she and Barry heard footsteps upstairs once again. The two investigators of the paranormal stood stock still. The footsteps were coming down the stairs – to the ground floor flat. A rattling sound was heard in the hallway. The thing upstairs was opening the fuse-box in the communal hallway. It removed the fuses and plunged the flats into darkness. In a confused daze, Barry rummaged through his holdall and by sense of touch he felt the 18-inch hawthorne stake and wooden mallet and grabbed them. Liz's trembling hands seized the ultraviolet torch. She slid the switch but the torch wasn't working. The filaments had burnt out or broken. She located a full size Gordon's Gin bottle filled with holy water and a wooden cross.

The door burst open and in a heartbeat something knocked Liz to the ground. She tried to scream but felt cold lips and a tongue pressing into her open mouth. Strong icy hands grabbed her throat and chest, pinning her to the ground. Barry felt intense nausea as he stumbled towards the shadowy thing covering Liz Brookes. He stabbed the wooden hawthorne stake into its back and slammed the mallet down, but the wooden hammer glanced off

the head of the stake and struck his thumb. Barry's attempt to stake the vampiric being distracted it for a moment, and in that window of opportunity, Liz lashed out with the gin bottle filled with blessed water and smashed it on the supernatural attacker. The weird assailant let out a long agonised shriek, then was heard running out of the room and down the hallway towards the kitchen. Barry picked up Liz and the two of them hurried out into the street via the front door. This was in the day when mobile phones were unheard of, and so the two amateur vampire hunters went to a public telephone box to call William Naismith. He told them to return to the flats to put the fuses back into the box, but Liz and Barry would not enter that house until the following morning when the light of dawn evaporated the fears of the night before. After that eventful night, there were no further strange goings-on at the flats, as if the vampire (and the possible vampiric child) had had enough. Research has shown that a Reverend Layton lived at the house in Hounslow in the 1890s, so perhaps the medium Ivy Jones was right. How then, did the warped, depraved reverend become a vampire after death? Occult lore states that suicides, some witches, evil murderers, men of the cloth who have been excommunicated because they have turned to the Devil, and those bitten by a vampire might become vampires themselves forty days after death. It is not hard to imagine the post-death fate of the soul of such a man as the reverend who molested dead bodies entrusted into his spiritual care, who ate a dead woman's heart, and entered into sexual intercourse with animals. Even by vampire standards, the Reverend was evidently a rotten specimen.

The Unknown Vampire Hunter

There are many superstitions surrounding the death of a person. At the moment of death, for example, tradition in many places across Britain dictates that doors and windows should be opened, and that mirrors should be covered in case the spirit of the deceased enters one of them by mistake. Wakes were held in many houses in the past, and they still continue in some parts of the UK. A corpse at such a wake must never be left alone or in the dark, lest it become the prey of demons, and from this custom we derive the ritual of the 'wake' – which is in essence a vigil to be kept on a body. There is a now-rare custom regarding the passage of the soul of the dead person to the world beyond called "Sin-Eating". This involved sprinkling salt on the breast of the dead person and leaving it on the corpse for a while until a plate of six or seven newly-baked savoury-tasting cakes was placed on a specially prepared table draped with a black tablecloth (sometimes displaying a skull and crossbones). The salt was then picked from the chest of the corpse and sprinkled onto these cakes, which were subsequently consumed by mourners partaking in the sin-eating ritual. By consuming the cakes with the salt, the partakers believed they were eating the sins of the deceased. This ritual was carried out on an old Hampshire farmer named Jack Savage, who died sometime in the early 19th century, probably 1810. The story regarding the alleged resurrection of this farmer was related to a Hampshire folklorist in Victorian times by one Alfred Summers, the landlord of the White Swan inn, Winchester, in 1899. The tale was also backed by several other people, who had in turn heard the 'yarn' from their elders. After his death, from what seems to have been a stroke, Jack Savage was laid in a coffin on the kitchen table at his cottage near to the ancient forest of Bere, and the sin-eating cake ritual commenced. For some obscure reason never explained in the story, the body of Savage was not allowed to be buried in a Christian churchyard, and so it was interred at a secluded spot in the nearby forest of Bere. A fortnight after the burial, two soldiers hired by the local farmer to catch poachers were patrolling the periphery of the Forest of Bere around midnight, when they caught five gypsies carrying out a bizarre ritual at Savage's unhallowed grave. The gypsies had dug up the coffin, bound it in three chains, and had attached a small crucifix to the coffin-lid. The oldest gypsy told the soldiers that the man in the coffin had

been rising from his grave to attack people in the area, and had bitten his grand-daughter, a girl of 8 years of age. She was now delirious and being cared for back at the gypsy encampment by a man with an immense knowledge of vampires named Jonathan. The soldiers were very sceptical of the old Romany gypsy's tale, and they ordered him and the other gypsies to remove the chains from the coffin and to rebury it immediately. With great reluctance the gypsies unbound the coffin, removed the crucifix from its lid and lowered the remains of Jack Savage back into the earth. They then headed back to their camp deep in Bere forest. Three days later, the two soldiers were again patrolling the farmstead near Bere Forest when they glimpsed a terrifying sight by the light of the moon. A tall thin bony man was darting about amongst a clump of trees with the speedy agility of a spider. The figure was so fast, the eyes of the soldiers were barely able to follow it, but at one point when the eerie man kept still for a few seconds, an opening in the low clouds allowed sufficient moonlight from the lunar orb to reveal that the swift prowler was none other than Jack Savage. As the military men squinted in the silvery moonshine in horrified disbelief, the ghastly-looking apparition of Farmer Savage flitted towards them. One of the men managed to rapidly draw his flintlock and fire, but missed the target wildly because the ghoul zig-zagged as he approached. The other soldier drew his pistol and calmly fired. There was a flash and accompanying bang, and the metal ball flew at the head of the weird-looking attacker from beyond the grave. The carnate, solid flesh-and-blood ghost of Jack Savage stopped and clutched his left eye with his hand, and blood streamed down his face. The projectile from the flintlock had destroyed the resurrected man's left eye, and he angrily lunged at the soldier who had harmed him – a man named Ned – and proceeded to bite his neck with such ferocity, the flesh was torn open and arterial blood spurted high into the air. The second soldier deserted his comrade and ran to the farmhouse of his employee in fear. In one version of the story, the body of the soldier Ned is not found, but according to another narrative, he was found beneath a hedge, drained of blood, with his back snapped so the back of his head touched his buttocks. After this shocking discovery, a rumour spread that Jack Savage had risen from his unhallowed grave as a vampire, and a vicar from the nearby Market Town of Fareham told his congregation that there were no such creatures as vampires. A lay-preacher in the town knew better, and rejected the vicar's claim, for he himself had had dealings

with many people in England and France over the years who had been troubled by vampires. The vicar stated that it was impossible for a man to raise from his grave, and the lay-preacher responded by quoting the accounts documented in the Bible about various resurrections: Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones being restored as a living army of flesh and blood; the resurrections performed by Jesus, such as the raising from the dead of the daughter of Jairus, the reanimation of a man in the middle of his own funeral, the recalling of Lazarus from his tomb, and of course, the resurrection of Christ himself and the account of the dead saints who came out of their tombs to enter Jerusalem after Jesus had risen from his own tomb. After Jesus, the Bible also mentions a resurrection of a female named Tabitha by Peter.

Curiosity seekers from all over southern Hampshire converged on Bere Forest, hoping to get a glimpse of the so-called vampire, and some were not disappointed. A Bailiff from Winchester named Knapp, and a local physician named Benwell, encountered the vampire during a vigil on the south-western fringes of Bere Forest at two in the morning. They had been sitting around a fire, discussing the nature of the supposed bloodsucker, and speculating on the reasons Savage had returned as a vampire. Some believed he had led a debauched life, but those who had known Jack Savage in life believed that because he had been a reclusive outcast of the community in life, he had returned as an outcast from the realm of death. As Knapp and Benwell talked on this subject into the night, they were startled to see the very subject of their conversation emerge from the cover of Bere Forest and stand less than two hundred feet away, gazing at the fire for a minute or so. Knapp cocked his flintlock and Benwell dipped a dry branch into the fire to use as a torch, intending to confront the freakish-looking creature. As soon as the two men got to their feet, the vampire dashed silently back into the forest. Knapp was not at all keen at Benwell's idea to follow the creature to its lair, and the bailiff eventually persuaded the doctor to give up the pursuit of the vampire. On the following evening, shortly after sunset, a little blind girl of seven years of age named Jane Hutton heard someone come into her bedroom. She asked who was there and received no reply. A coarse hand stroked her face and patted her head, and the breath and body odour of the silent stranger reeked of rancid meat. Jane started to whimper, and when her grandmother came into her little room under the eaves of the thatched cottage, she found the window open.

The rotten stench of the mysterious intruder still hung in the air, and the grandmother, remembering the strange tales of the vampire of Bere Forest, closed the window, and took little Jane from her own room and placed her safely between her parents in their bed.

The vampire expert Jonathan - who the gypsies had mentioned to the soldiers guarding the farmer's land – was sought and consulted. He is described as a man of around fifty years of age, of middle height, with long sandy-grey hair, lantern-jawed, and an excellent swordsman. A traveller from Southampton named Keel described the vampire specialist as a man of military bearing who had served in the Anglo-Turkish War, despite his relatively advanced age. Jonathan would provide no details of his background beyond documented proof that he was born in Northumberland in 1760. A few paranoid locals believed he was a French spy, but most recognised that the man was an honest authority on the Occult, and vampires in particular. The local people around Bere Forest offered a small reward to Jonathan in return for laying the vampire of Jack Savage to rest, but he declined the prize money and reassured the frightened people of the region that he would destroy the fiend. Around this time, the young gypsy girl that Savage had attacked made a complete recovery thanks to a herbal medicine formulated by the intriguing and brave vampire hunter. Many men and women of all ages volunteered to be of assistance to the vampire-killer, but he refused all help and instructed everyone to stay indoors on the designated night when he would hunt down the parasitic fiend and eradicate it so not a trace of the creature remained. Jonathan made an inspection of Jack Savage's grave by daylight and found the coffin empty, which meant that he had a lair. By some supernatural means which may have involved dowsing, the vampire hunter traced his sinister quarry to an ancient hollow tree where the unholy leech could be heard faintly snoring. Jonathan hammered an iron spike through the trunk so it emerged on the other side of the bark, and the vampire let out a bloodcurdling high-pitched scream, because the spike had pierced its heart. The huntsman of the undead then tore a canopy of intertwined leaves from the side of the trunk where the creature entered and left its arboreal sanctuary, and the sunlight shone onto the right side of the writhing vampire, vaporising the flesh from half of its face and its right hand. The left eye of the vampire had been shot out by one of the soldiers guarding the farmstead some time before, and the remaining eye turned red and began to bleed because of exposure to ultraviolet light

from what the creature regarded as the accursed sun. The vampire hunter then hurled a bucket of highly-inflammable liquid which was said to be “Greek Fire” onto the trapped and impaled creature. Greek Fire, once a closely-guarded secret of the chemists of Constantinople, cannot be extinguished with water, which instead serves to intensify the flames, and so when it began to rain, the fire flared up and not only burnt the vampire to ash, it also consumed the dead hollow tree containing the creature. By dawn, the local people saw nothing but charred bones among the smoking embers of the tree, and these skeletal remains of the vampire were systematically destroyed in a blacksmith’s fire until they were turned to powder. The vampire of Jack Savage never prowled southern Hampshire again and Jonathan, the mystifying vampire hunter later left the area with a convoy of gypsy caravans and was heard from no more.

Mr Sphinx

One stormy evening at Woolton Hall - a beautiful Grade II listed stately home in Lancashire - in 2003, I gave an illustrated talk on the subject of the supernatural, which included several tales about local vampires. After the talk, Susan, a distinguished-looking woman of eighty, approached me and told me how much she had enjoyed the stories and slide show pictures. She then related an intriguing story of her own that was as good, if not better, than any of the tales I'd been telling to people that evening. This is the account she gave. Susan was born in Northumberland in 1923, and her mother, a teacher of English and Latin, brought Susan to Liverpool in 1933. Susan's father had deserted her mother just before the girl's birth. In the leafy lanes of suburban Aigburth, ten-year-old Susan and her mother settled into a beautiful house on Waverley Road. However, the rent for the fine residence was barely covered by the money Susan's mother brought in from her job as a private tutor.

In the autumn of 1933, a tall, smartly-dressed stranger with coal-black hair and penetrating green eyes called at the house, and told Susan's mother, in a foreign accent, that he would like to learn how to speak English. The man's name, Raymond Sphinx, struck Susan as being rather odd to say the least. Susan's mother explained that many foreigners choose their own names to replace their real, exotic-sounding surnames, in order to blend in to the country they are living in. Mr Sphinx was quite handsome, and as Susan related this tale, she recalled.how her mother seemed totally mesmerised by the debonair foreigner, who seemed to be about thirty-five years of age. He was so courteous and sophisticated, and must have been an excellent student, as he was soon speaking with a fine, mellifluous English accent.

Children are very perceptive and discerning when it comes to seeing through the pretensions of adults, and young Susan thought there was something decidedly uncanny about Mr Sphinx. He seemed to appear out of nowhere whenever he visited for his lessons, and throughout the early summer of 1934, Susan watched him walk out on to a veranda - and when she followed, he had vanished. When she mentioned this to her mother, she was accused of having an overactive imagination.

Some time later though, Susan's mother said she too had seen Raymond walk on to the veranda and then seemingly disappear into thin air. She even mentioned the incident to him on the following day, but he just smiled his enigmatic smile and said that he had slipped past her but she hadn't noticed him. Susan's mother said nothing, but knew that simply had not been the case at all.

Mr Sphinx continued to come to the house, long after he needed to, as he now spoke English as perfectly as Susan's mother. Then it slowly dawned on Susan that her mother was romantically involved with the foreigner, and on many nights she would listen to him as he sat at the piano in the drawing room, bringing forth soul-stirring concertos of Mozart and Beethoven. Some of the other, unknown melodies sounded mysterious and romantic, and they brought tears to the eyes of Susan's mother.

The multi-talented Mr Sphinx was also an amazing storyteller, and on winter evenings he would sit before a blazing coal fire with Susan by his side and tell her tales of kings, queens, and ordinary people of long ago. He would also describe the daring missions. quests and crusades of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, and a saga about two young lovers on opposing sides during the Wars of the Roses. Raymond told these stories with such skill, that his listeners almost believed they were actually there, in the midst of the romance, danger and intrigue.

Susan's mother's liking for Mr Sphinx must have waned, because she became involved with another man in 1936, and Raymond decided to leave but, before he went, he produced a single blood-red rose, backed with maidenhair fern and gave it to thirteen-year-old Susan, who was heart-broken at the idea of him leaving her life. Raymond whispered the word 'Zuzana' - an old Slavic word for the rose -and said that he would return one day when she was older, and declared that his love for her was undying. He said that the rose he had given her would never die, just like the affection he felt for her. With a tear in his eye, he said, "Remember me," then left, and Susan began to sob. She begged her mother to leave her lover and to resume her relationship with Raymond, but to no avail.

The rose which Mr Sphinx had given to Susan refused to wilt, and she kept it in a special box. World War Two came and went, and still the red rose and maidenhair fern looked as fresh as the day he had given them to her.

In 1948, at the age of twenty-five, Susan married a thirty-one-year-old man named Ralph, and moved with him just around the corner from her mother, to live over the grocery shop he owned. Susan's mother was ill at this time, and her condition was exacerbated by the anger she felt towards Susan for "marrying beneath herself" as she put it, and the heartbreak she was enduring because her lover had deserted her for a much younger woman.

Weeks later, Susan's mother died from pulmonary complications, and only Susan, Ralph and a doctor were at her bedside. About a fortnight after the funeral, Susan went to the cemetery alone to place flowers on her mother's grave, and during the visit she had an encounter that initially shocked her. A tall man dressed in black was already standing at the foot of her mother's grave. He turned as Susan approached. It was Raymond Sphinx, and he looked as if he hadn't aged a day since she last saw him in 1936, twelve years ago. He stood there with a faint smile on his lips; his arms outstretched to embrace Susan. He hugged and kissed her, and offered his deepest condolences. He assured her that her mother had merely shed her physical body, and that her soul had gone on to another plane of existence, where every person ends up when earthly life ceases.

Susan felt an intense physical and romantic attraction to Raymond, and she asked him to accompany her to her late mother's home on Waverley Road. At the house where Raymond had first met Susan as a child, she showed him the box containing the undying rose. Raymond embraced Susan and kissed her passionately. Not long afterwards they were making love, and throughout the act, Susan felt all her energy steadily draining away.

When the couple had finished making love, Susan felt numb and empty, and so listless, she could hardly make the effort to draw breath. A strange thought crossed her lethargic mind: had Raymond somehow siphoned off the very essence of her life force? Her lover leaned on his elbow beside her, and scanned her face, then put his palm on her forehead. Susan felt a distinct sensation of something in flux passing between his hand and her mind. Energy flowed down her spine and a strange cold tingling sensation coursed down her arms and legs.

After a while, Raymond removed his palm and then kissed Susan's cheek. She raised herself up and asked him what had just happened. She was more fascinatec than afraid. She had never experienced such intense

electric pleasures when her husband had made love to her. What Raymond told her shocked her to her core. Sphinx explained that he was a "type of vampire". He was nothing like the Dracula character of the Bram Stoker novel. He didn't suck blood, but he did "feed" off the life force of people - 'prana'.

Susan found herself putting on her dress without bothering to put on her I underwear first. She trembled as Raymond sat at end of the bed with his head bowed and knew that he wasn't mentally unbalanced. She also knew he wasn't just trying to frighten her - he was telling the truth - she could tell by that look of sincerity in his green eyes.

"Please don't go, Susan," he said meekly.

The everlasting rose flashed into her mind. Of course! - now it all made sense. All those tales of long ago that Raymond had told around the fireside when she was a child. No wonder he had been able to make them sound so realistic - he must have been walking the earth for hundreds of years! Was he some kind of devil?

Susan didn't stop to look back as she hurried out of the bedroom in a panic, clutching her shoes. She walked barefooted down the road and only put the shoes on once she had turned the corner, from where she walked in shock back to her home above the greengrocer's. Ralph didn't even notice that her hair was in disarray, her lipstick smudged and her clothes dishevelled. Susan didn't return to her former home on Waverley Road until the next day, and when she did, she made sure that a friend went with her. She need not have worried - Raymond had gone.

In 1977, at the age of fifty-four, Susan was out shopping in Liverpool city centre when, just as she was leaving Binn's department store, she came face to face with Raymond. He still looked around thirty-five, with not a single wrinkle on his handsome face, or grey hair on his head. His green eyes sparkled as keenly as ever. He didn't recognise her at first, and he walked on past - but then he hesitated, and turned around. Not a word was spoken for a frozen moment in time. Then, as if he hadn't seen Susan for just a few days, he asked her how she was, and reached out for her hand - but Susan pulled away. He then suggested going to a nearby cafe, but Susan resolutely shook her head. Raymond seemed to sense that she was worried over something, and asked if her husband was well. Susan didn't answer. Instead, she turned and walked away, as Raymond shouted her name three

times. She resolutely ignored him and walked away towards the safety of the crowds milling in and out of Woolworths.

In the Northern Hospital that evening, Susan's husband Ralph was lying in a bed, drifting in and out of a comatose state with a blood clot on his brain. The doctors had told Susan that he was in a critical condition and there was a high probability that he would not pull through. It had already been explained to her that brain surgery would be far too risky in Ralph's weakened condition.

At home, Susan fastened the top and bottom bolts of the front door, and locked her back door. Not only was she totally distraught about her husband's grave condition, but also deeply troubled about the meeting with Raymond, after all those years. She also wondered if the eerie Raymond had somehow followed her home. She took an old Bible up to the bedroom and sat up in bed, listening to the radio. She reached for the old Bible and opened it at random. She scanned a passage about the transfiguration of Christ, and for some reason it made her think about Raymond. With shame, she recalled the strange, unearthly sensations she had experienced when she was in the bed with him all those years ago, and of that mysterious word he spoke - *prana*.

At almost three in the morning, Susan drifted into a fitful sleep that was haunted by dreams of Raymond. At eight o'clock the bell of the alarm clock sounded, and she swung her legs out of the bed like an automaton, with her eyelids still stuck together. With a sinking feeling in the pit of her stomach, she went downstairs to the hall, still in her nightdress, and telephoned the hospital. She feared the worst and dreaded to hear what they would say about her husband's condition. She was in for a massive shock. The sister on duty said that she had some very good news. Ralph was no longer on the critical list; in fact, he was sitting up in bed, eating a hearty breakfast and laughing and joking with all the nurses. He had made a recovery that was nothing short of miraculous.

Susan was dressed and ready within half an hour of hearing this wonderful news and was soon riding in a cab to the hospital. Bursting with excitement, she rushed into the room where Ralph had lain at the gates of death for almost a month ... and found the bed empty. The other bed in that room, in which a young man had been recovering from a spinal injury, was also vacant. Then she heard the sound of footsteps in the corridor to her right. It was Ralph, walking along with a nurse on either side of him,

supporting him as he walked along. When he saw Susan he stopped in his tracks, and she ran to him with tears welling in her eyes. She hugged him so tightly, and he kept saying, "There, there, love," as he patted her on the back.

The nurses seemed to be just as overjoyed as they were - such miraculous recoveries happened so rarely. They showed Susan and Ralph into the two-bed ward, then left to give them some privacy. Ralph told Susan a tale that made her stomach somersault. He said that a "funny-looking man" had come into his room some time after midnight. He had walked over to Pete - the young man who was lying asleep in the other bed - and had placed his hands on the young man's chest. Ralph had been barely conscious, and the whole thing had a dream-like quality. The man - who was dressed in black - then came over to Ralph's bed and placed his palms on his chest. The intense heat from the stranger's hands penetrated right through his pyjamas, and his vest, straight into his heart. Ralph felt his entire body tingling, as if he had been plugged into the electricity mains. The man then assured Ralph that he would get better soon, then left the room in absolute silence - just like a ghost. At six o'clock in the morning, Ralph opened his eyes, feeling like a new man. He sat up, stretched and yawned, and found a Catholic priest, a doctor and three relatives surrounding the bed of the man opposite, who was obviously dying. The priest was administering the Last Rites of the Roman Catholic Church, and Pete died soon afterwards.

"You don't believe me, do you?" Ralph said to Susan, who was staring at the single red rose, backed with a stem of maidenhead fern, lying on the bedside cabinet.

She knew exactly what had happened. Raymond - or whatever his real name was - had siphoned off the life of the young man in the other bed, and had infused that life into Ralph. Why had he done this? Susan still doesn't have any answers to this question.

Before Susan left Woolton Hall that stormy night, she told me that she was convinced that Mr Sphinx was still around.

"He will probably visit you if you put him in one of your books," she told me. She then bade me goodnight, and a hackney cab took her off into the night.

The Brownlow Hill Vampire

I first read about the basic details of the following creepy story from an article by the world-renowned criminologist and folklore historian historian Richard Whittington-Egan, and it led me on to research the story in much more depth. Whittington-Egan mentioned a bookseller's house on Liverpool's Brownlow Hill which was haunted by an entity, and tin researching the background to his story, I discovered that the so-called haunting, believed to have been the work of a poltergeist, had a much more sinister history. This is what I unearthed with my delvings.

In the 1930s, a family at a house on the corner of Brownlow Hill and Trowbridge Street, were troubled by what they assumed to be rats in their cellar. The Williams family heard a loud scratching sound coming from the cellar on many occasions, and so rat catchers were brought in but caught nothing.

One afternoon, there was a loud crash in the cellar, and when Mr Williams went to investigate, he found a huge gaping hole in the cellar wall, and a pile of crumbled old bricks below it. He summoned his brother, and they both peered into the hole with candles. What they saw amazed them. The hole led to what seemed to be a series of catacombs and tunnels. The Williams brothers knew nothing of the so-called Mole of Edge Hill, and naturally wondered who had constructed the tunnels. They heard the sound of someone breathing heavily nearby, and the faint sounds of footsteps. It sounded like someone large and heavy, and the brothers felt very uneasy, so they left the tunnel, and bolted back in to the cellar. During this time, both men could smell something very similar to altar incense wafting from the tunnels.

The brothers ran upstairs and locked the cellar door, and told a policeman, who went to investigate the tunnels later that day with his bull's eye lantern. After a brief exploration of the subterranean passages, the constable returned shortly afterwards, white as a sheet. He told Mr Williams that subsidence was to blame, and that the so-called catacombs were just cellars. He advised him to get the hole bricked up again and left sharpishly. Two relatives were bricklayers, so Mr Williams arranged for them to do the job, but halfway through the bricking up, the men heard strange sounds from the tunnels. They continued bricking up the hole as fast as possible,

when' suddenly, something very powerful punched through the newly set bricks, scattering them everywhere. The bricklayers fled from that cellar as fast as their legs could carry them, and refused to go back, even to retrieve their work tools.

Mrs Williams refused to stay in the house alone when her husband went to work, because she thought she had seen a very tall man in black dart across the hall one day towards the cellar. Matters took a sensational when an old man in Trowbridge Street claimed that an old vampire was said to have his lair beneath Brownlow Hill. The man was much respected in the neighbourhood and was regarded as a very wise person. He said he remembered people who had gone missing from the Liverpool Workhouse which stood on Brownlow Hill in Victorian times. A 'thing' was said to come from under a slab in the bowels of the workhouse to seize women and children.

Strangely enough, a man who ran Collin's Bookshop on Brownlow Hill confirmed that there had indeed been such a legend. Some said the thing was a ghoul, others claimed it was a vampiric being which lived in a labyrinth of tunnels and chambers under the city. One person in particular was said to know about the strange creature. He was Thomas Whiteside, Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool. He had even sought advice from the Vatican on how to deal with vampires, which are mentioned, or made reference to, in all of the world's cultures. The eating of the body of bread and drinking of wine for blood in the Christian Mass is thought to echo a much older ritual which had vampiric origins. There were stories that Archbishop Whiteside had tried and failed to defeat the thing in the tunnels.

Now we go forward to the mid-1960s. The Metropolitan Cathedral was being built on the site of the workhouse, and the crypt beneath the cathedral was being visited by vandals mostly from Paddington Gardens and the Bullring Tenement. A night watchman named Sugnall was brought in to guard the crypt. In this crypt, which lies deep below the basalt and sandstone of a miniature quarry, there are tombs. There's a vaulted chapel called the Chapel of Relics, and inside there are three large tombs containing the mortal remains of the former Archbishops of Liverpool, Thomas Whiteside, Dr Richard Downey, and Dr George Andrew Beck. These tombs are sealed by a gigantic rolling stone, shaped like a disc. It weighs six tons, and requires machinery to roll it open.

One hot summer evening, the night watchman Sugnall went into the crypt with his Dansette radio and his sandwiches. He sat down in a corner near a small window which hadn't had glass put into it yet, and he was unwrapping his sandwiches - when he felt the ground shaking. The giant disc-shaped stone was moving, turning slowly anti-clockwise, until a black gaping hole appeared. From this gap walked an abnormally tall figure in black, who slipped into the room where Sugnall was on duty.

The figure was insubstantial, like a shadow, or a silhouette, and it was heading straight for the night watchman Sugnall. He couldn't run for the door, because the terrifying figure was in the way, so he turned, and in sheer terror and desperation, he tried to scramble through the small hole where the window pane was yet to be fitted. He smashed his head repeatedly against the small opening in blind panic, and then collapsed from shock and concussion.

When Sugnall woke up the lights were off in the crypt, and he had to feel his way to the door. His hand trembled as he tried each key to unlock the door, and as soon as it was opened, he ran for his life. He was later treated for a fractured skull in the Royal Hospital on Pembroke Place. Sugnall never returned to his old job, and the authorities blamed vandals for the minimal damage to the crypt, which was subsequently re-sealed.

Stranger still, that very same week, there was a series of grave robberies in the cemetery of the Anglican Cathedral. All the robberies took place in supposedly impenetrable tombs. Strange men and women in black had been seen in the cathedral cemetery that week, and police even went to the trouble of visiting schools in Edge Hill and Toxteth to advise children to avoid going near the cathedral on their way home. Considering the vast subterranean legacy of the Mole of Edge Hill, and the other unchartered tunnels of Liverpool, could the Brownlow Hill vampire still be at large beneath the city streets?